

PREACHING FOR TRANSFORMATION:

DEVELOPING SERMONS THAT AIM AT
PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

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To Kerri, Tyler, Chad, Jacob and Anna-Noelle, you
are an answer to prayer and the joy of my heart.
When God said he longed to give me good gifts he
thought of you.

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ABSTRACT

Research indicates people who call themselves Christians and who listen to dozens of sermons each year are morally hard to distinguish from people who claim no faith in God and have no practice of listening to sermons preached from God's Word. It is God's intention to see His followers transformed into the image of His Son. One of the methods he has chosen to use to realize this spiritual life-change is the preaching of His Word. But preachers have to make sure they are committed to life-changing sermons and not merely an informational exchange. Sermons are meant to bring transformation not simply inform people of what a Biblical text is saying. This thesis-project will help Christian communicators understand how their preaching can align with God's vision to see people conformed to the image of His Son.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

This thesis project is designed to help preachers communicate life-changing sermons that result in the transformation of followers of Christ. Transformation is not about trying harder or having a better life. Mark Twain reportedly said that church is good people standing in front of good people teaching them to be good people. The change people need is not simply about being a better person; that would be a misunderstanding of change and transformation. The gospel is bigger than simple moralism, and people need to understand the very nature of transformation. It is about recognizing the life of God within the believer and how to respond to the work of God's Spirit within us. The goal is Christ Himself, and as church leaders it should be our goal as well—for ourselves and the ones we lead. Transformation is the journey of becoming on the outside what God has made us inside, "New Creations," predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.¹ Being transformed is basically the freedom to live out your destiny, not your history. But according to the studies transformation is not what everyone is experiencing.

Statement of the Problem

George Barna tells us that when he evaluates the behavior of the average church goer, he finds little to distinguish them from those who spend their Sundays on the lake or

¹ Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 5:17 Unless otherwise indicated, scripture references are from The New International Version (NIV).

camping in the mountains.² Gallup pollsters second the notion of the untransformed church when they report finding little difference in the behavior of those who classify themselves as "born again" from those who are not "born again."³ Even with a few Sundays away for vacation or business trips, most evangelicals will hear a minimum of forty sermons a year. Over a five year period "born again" believers will listen to at least 200 sermons, yet Barna and Gallup tell us the impact will be negligible. In a survey that asked, "What frustrates you the most about preaching?" – "No Life Change/No Response" was one of the most common responses given by the pastors.⁴

Might it be that we as preachers have adopted a paradigm of preaching that believes proclaiming information is enough? Could it be that we have allowed our preaching to remain in abstract idealism, failing to move God's Word from information to transformation? Maybe one of the reasons "churched Harry and Mary" can listen to forty sermons a year and live a lifestyle similar to their unchurched neighbors is because preachers have fallen into the trap of believing that if they have the right data the listener will move the abstract truth to concrete application. It could be that we have invested the majority of our sermon preparation on exegeting the text and have failed to make the connection between the scriptural truth and Harry and Mary's everyday life.⁵

² Barna Group, *Survey Finds Lots of Spiritual Dialogue but not Much Change*, <http://www.barna.org/transformation-articles/433-survey-finds-lots-of-spiritual-dialogue-but-not-much-change> (accessed October 23, 2010).

³ George Gallup Jr. and D. Michael Lindsay, *Surveying the Religious Landscape: Trends in US Beliefs* (Harrisburg PA, Morehouse Publishing, 1999), 14.

⁴ Outreach Marketing, *Pastoral Survey*, <http://www.sermoncentral.com>, (accessed November 15, 2010).

⁵ David Veerman, "Sermons: Apply Within," *Leadership*, Spring 1990, 121.

One of the challenges of Christian preaching is to help broken and sinful people become conformed to the image of Christ for the glory of God. Preaching joins with many other disciplines all seeking to move people toward maturity. The challenge that uniquely faces the communicator of God's Word is, what kind of preaching fulfills the vision of God in helping people become more like Christ? Our preaching must be in alignment with God's desires to conform us to the image of His Son. It takes far more than an informed mind to become like Christ--it takes a transformed heart. But how does the preaching of God's Word contribute to this process of transformation? Is it the catalyst of the change or simply a commentary of the kind of work God is doing in the lives of people?⁶ Is preaching subsidiary to the transforming work that happens in the community or does the preaching of God's Word work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit to bring about the maturity God has in mind?

The Need for this Project

This study is important for five reasons. First, God is glorified when his people reflect the attitudes and actions of Christ.⁷ God has a vision for people's lives: "For those

⁶ William H. Willimon, "The Art of Transformational Preaching" (sermon, Festival of Homiletics, Nashville, TN, May 21-25, 2007), <http://homiletics.impactlearning.org/store/seminar/seminar.php?seminar=5385> (accessed November 15, 2010). Bishop William Willimon made two comments on preaching that seem to limit its involvement in the process of transformation: "Our preaching becomes a commentary of the kind of work that God is doing in the lives of people." "Preaching is subsidiary to the transforming work that happens in the community and needs to understand its relationship both as its servant and its voice." While I respect Bishop Willimon tremendously, in my opinion his conclusions fall short of what the Scriptures speak concerning the value of Biblical preaching.

⁷ John 15:7, 8.

God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son..."⁸ It is God's desire that those who follow him be transformed into the likeness of Christ. Preaching that moves beyond merely imparting information to aiding transformation aligns itself with the vision of God. When lives are transformed and people are obedient in their behavior, God is glorified.⁹

Second, when our preaching leads to changed lives we strengthen the greatest apologetic the church has. Jesus tells us that the world will know we are his followers by how we love each other. Jesus also says we are the light of the world. He exhorts Christians to "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."¹⁰ It does not say--"let them hear your good words." The power of a changed life is the most strategic apologetic available today because it cannot be discredited.

Third, pastors need to learn to preach to effect transformation. Most pastors intuitively know that their ministry in the pulpit can have a significant impact on the lives of the congregation. When pastors develop their gifts of preaching, entire congregations benefit. It is not easy to take eternal truth and connect it to individual's lives. It is much easier to articulate the results of our exegetical study, failing to identify the implications of God's truth. This study will aid the weekly preacher to develop skills that help him become a transformational communicator.

⁸ Romans 8:29.

⁹ I Corinthians 9:18-20.

¹⁰ Matthew 5:14-16.

Fourth, this study is for those who sit in the pew. Most people want to change. If you listen to them talk they will tell you of areas in their lives where they would like to see growth. Many have anger problems that they would like to gain victory over. More than a few men have struggled with sexual issues that have hurt their marriages, careers, children or even more broadly the body of Christ. Some have sat across a table and told me they want to be different. Transformational preaching's primary goal is not to condemn them for not changing, but to show them how to change.

Fifth and quite possibly the most important, it is God's stated purpose that people be conformed to the image of Christ.¹¹ This naturally means a lack of conformity to the patterns of this world by the renewing of our minds.¹² It is God's will for each Christian to be transformed. The shepherds of God's community must help people in this process through their preaching or they are not doing what God wants for them and their congregation.

God has called preachers to proclaim His truth and He has given us promises that His Word will judge our thoughts and motives. The Word will cut our hearts. God's Sword when intersected with the human heart has the potential for life-change. The church needs skillful preachers who are committed to the authority of God's Word, but are also able to connect it the hearts of those who listen. In cooperation with the Holy Spirit, Proclaimers of God's Word are called not just to inform those listening, but to preach so as to transform their lives.

¹¹ Romans 8:29.

¹² Romans 12:2.

The end product of this project will be a manual that can be used by Bible College or Seminary students, by pastors wishing to enhance their preaching proficiency, and by teachers of homiletics who want to help students develop transformational sermons. In addition, this manual will be used in our local church setting that is committed to mentoring teachers and preachers to be transformational communicators.

Chapter two will be a survey of the biblical and theological issues concerning the relationship of preaching and transformation. Topics to be discussed will include the vision of God for Christ-likeness and the intent of Biblical preaching.

Chapter three will be a survey of literature on topics such as transformation; the process and journey of personal change, the relationship between application and change, and how preaching can be part of the change process.

The fourth chapter of the thesis-project is the manual itself which addresses the practical concerns of how to prepare and deliver transformational expository sermons.

A few observations need to be stated here before we move on in our discussion. The preaching of God's Word is a mystery involving both the skill of the preacher and more importantly the gracious work of the Spirit of God. A healthy level of humility and reliance on the transcendent God is essential for any effective communicator. While it is important to hone our skills as preachers one must always be reminded that it is ultimately God who changes lives. There is no technique we can master that will guarantee change—we are all deeply dependent upon the Spirit's work.

While the focus of this thesis will be on the preacher and his message, transformation happens best in the long term engagement with the Christian community. We must live out the truth of God's word in relationship with people or it never really touches our hearts and changes the very fabric of our character. A Christian's transformation is the formation of Christlikeness that is wrought through the church in the little things we do daily. The preacher is part of that community and together works out the truth of God's Word with the congregation. It should be obvious that God who came to earth to dwell among people would then call those who speak on behalf of Jesus to also dwell among people. It makes the truth feel trustworthy and safe when they observe the preacher at close range. With this in mind, the preacher of the local congregation has a decided advantage over the itinerant preacher. One might even come to the conclusion of Bishop Willimon: "the only person who should be preaching is the local pastor who lives among the people."¹³ This may be too strong a conclusion, but it does remind us that the message of God is often most easily heard and embraced when the person preaching is one who dwells among the people.

¹³ Willimon, "The Art of Transformational Preaching," (accessed November 15, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

Life-change is not easy. At the beginning of every year there are legions of hope-filled people who will attempt once again to bring about some desired change in their lives. They will join clubs, pay psychics, and attend small groups, all with the desire that they overcome some battle: lose twenty unwanted pounds or even more significantly, become a better parent or spouse. Yet many will wind up casting their new resolutions aside by February--regrettably putting their hopes off for another year.

Life-change is a mystery. It involves many factors of which we have little control. There is a time element in transformation that varies with each situation. For some the clock seems to move slowly when it comes to becoming like Christ, while for others the change comes quickly. Then there is the element of responsibility. Is change the product of our hard work or God's gracious gift? Scripture will show support for both sides. Life-change is neither all up to us, nor is it all up to God. There is a rich combination in our transformation that involves our "working out our salvation"¹ and God's grace that "teaches us to say no to ungodliness."² As difficult as life-change is, it remains the call and vision of God that broken vessels will be conformed to the image of His Son.³

Those who accept the invitation to preach have to decide on the purpose of their communication. Are they there to inform a person of a specific idea or are they seeking to go beyond the mind where they not only inform, but transform the heart bringing about

¹ Philippians 2:12.

² Titus 2:10-11.

³ Romans 8:29.

life-change? A survey of Scripture leads us to a conclusion that God's desire reaches past an enlightened mind--He wants to change the heart. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, the apostle Paul affirms this vision when he tells us we are being transformed into the image of Christ from one degree of glory to another. He goes on to tell us that this progressive change comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. John Walvoord makes the point concerning Paul's statement: "As believers manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), they are progressively being transformed into His likeness. Christlikeness is the goal of the Christian walk (Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10)."⁴ It should be the goal of every preacher to align their intent with the purpose of God. Why must we commit to such a task? Because sin has entered the world and the human condition needs transformation.

The Need for Transformation

When sin entered our world, it brought death with it.⁵ When death touched creation there was no part that was unaffected. The book of Genesis unfolds the tragic entry of sin into this world. God promised to Adam and Eve that if they ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil they would die. The devastation that entered the world when they sinned had three distinct aspects. There would be a death that touched them spiritually, relationally and physically.

The most immediate death they experienced was their relationship with God. In Genesis 3:9, 10 we read, "But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He

⁴ John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), S. 2:562.

⁵ Genesis 3:3.

answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked so I hid.” Their relationship with God that was characterized by love and intimacy now experienced fear and shame. The word Adam used, יָרָא, translated in the NIV as afraid according to BDB means to be fearful, to be terrified or anxious, to be afraid.⁶ Fear and apprehension entered the human-God relationship. Why was he afraid of God? Adam said he was naked. The term עָרָם, gives us a picture of how Adam felt about himself. It is used figuratively, meaning “to be discovered” or “made manifest”.⁷ In Ex. 32:25, the expression “the people were naked” (A.V.) is more correctly rendered in the Revised Version “the people were broken loose”, i.e., had fallen into a state of lawlessness and insubordination.⁸ Adam and Eve had been discovered by God. Robert Utley rightly identifies the devastation that sin had on Adam and Eve’s relationship with God.

What a tragedy! Adam is afraid of the loving God who created him and wanted to know him. The intensity of evil can be clearly seen here as man still continues to hide from God, from himself, from his family and from the natural order. The fact that he was naked was simply a cover-up of the real problem which was open-eyed rebellion to the will of God.⁹

W. Griffith Thomas has forcibly summed up the significance of the damage sin had on Adam’s relationship to God:

⁶ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 2000), under “S. 314,” <http://www.logos.com> (accessed November 20, 2010).

⁷ Job 26:6; Hebrews 4:13.

⁸ M. G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1996), page nr., <http://www.logos.com/product/558/eastons-bible-dictionary> (accessed November 20, 2011).

⁹ Robert James Utley, *How It All Began: Genesis 1-11* (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2001, Study Guide Commentary Series Vol. 1A), S. 49.

God's question to Adam still sounds in the ear of every sinner: 'where art thou?' It is the call of Divine justice, which cannot overlook sin. It is the call of Divine sorrow, which grieves over the sinner. It is the call of Divine love, which offers redemption from sin. To each and to every one of us the call is reiterated, "Where art thou?"¹⁰

In addition to the relational break with God, Adam and Eve would also experience a form of death in their own relationship. Hughes and Laney elaborate on this relationship death.

The conflict between the man and the woman, foretold in the words "desire" and "master" in Genesis 3:16, is seen in the same Hebrew words used in 4:7. The strain that would occur between man and woman was in regard to the man's ruling and supremacy over the woman. The world of man-woman relationships specifically and all relationships generally had fallen prey to the upside-down chaos that resulted from Adam's sin.¹¹

Death would also be experienced physically. Most notably, humans would experience death on this earth. Romans 8:22 informs us that humans live in a creation that groans under the penalty of sin and death. The Apostle Paul states in 2 Corinthians 4:16 that our bodies are wasting away. The term διαφθείρω, translated in the NIV as wasting, according to Zodhiates, means to defile, destroy, corrupt, or to decay wholly, to perish.¹² Sin-stained people ache under the influence of sin as they live out the consequences of a life severed from a relationship with God. As people live out their rejection of God, He

¹⁰ Thomas, W. Griffith. Quoted in *Gleanings in Genesis* by Arthur Pink (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1922), 41.

¹¹ Robert B. Hughes and J. Carl Laney, *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001, Tyndale Reference Library), S. 12.

¹² Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2000), under "S. G1311," <http://www.logos.com/product/1723/the-complete-word-study-dictionary-new-testament> (accessed November 19, 2010).

gives them over to a depraved mind and behaviors that come from hearts that are wicked.¹³ The life of the unbeliever is one defined by imprisonment to sin.¹⁴ We are born sinful and in need of transformation. Even for those who trust Christ and receive the Living Holy Spirit, transformation remains an ongoing need.

The Bible describes Christians as “new creations” in Christ and “the old has gone and the new has come.”¹⁵ Didn’t salvation take care of all the past? Some translations lead one to believe that everything is new for the Christian when they translate 2 Corinthians in the following way, “all things have become new.” The word in the Greek translated “have become,” is ‘γίνομαι.’ This word is in the perfect verb tense, which has to do with a past event that has *ongoing* consequences, not *completed* consequences.¹⁶ An amplified translation might read, “a new life has begun!”¹⁷ It is roughly the equivalent of going from being single to being married—many new things come with a new relationship, but that newness is not to be confused with sudden perfection. Charles Ryrie helps to summarize this ongoing work of transformation being affirmed by Paul:

Regeneration brings with it a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17), which means a new capacity to serve righteousness. The old nature is not eradicated, for the capacity to serve self continues until we die. Regeneration does not make a man perfect, but it places him in the family of God and gives him the new ability to please his

¹³ Romans 1:21-32.

¹⁴ Romans 8:6-8.

¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:17.

¹⁶ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), under S. 2 Co 5:17,” <http://www.logos.com/product/815/word-pictures-in-the-new-testament> (accessed November 19, 2010).

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:17b New Living Translation.

Father by growing into the image of Christ. Fruit from the new nature is proof that regeneration has occurred (1 John 2:29).¹⁸

This truth corresponds to many other passages in God's Word,¹⁹ as well as people's continuing experience with sin and its on-going levels of influence and bondage. Christ brings a new heart to the believer, but there is a need for ongoing transformation.

The Journey of Transformation

The mission Jesus came to earth to fulfill not only dealt with His dying for our salvation, but also His living to affect our sanctification—the re-making of our lives into His image.²⁰ Jesus invited his disciples to come and follow him and his promise was “I will make you fishers of men.”²¹ Later he invites his disciples to enter his rest and learn from him. The term μαθηάω translated in the NIV as learned, according to Zodhiates, means “to have learned something, to understand it, which denotes instruction concerning the facts and plan of salvation. In this sense it means to learn with a moral bearing and responsibility.”²² Strong's concordance suggests learning means “to learn by use and practice or to be in the habit of a certain behavior.”²³ Jesus intended to change the way people thought and acted. A similar picture is given by Paul when he states in 2 Corinthians 3:18 that we will reflect the Lord's glory as we are increasingly transformed into Christ likeness. The present passive use of μεταμορφουμεθα, translated in the NIV as

¹⁸ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), c1972.

¹⁹ Acts 8:23; 2 Corinthians 10:4; Romans 7:15, 12:1-2; Hebrews 12:1.

²⁰ Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18.

²¹ Matthew 4:19.

²² Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, S. G3129.

²³ James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), under “S. G3129,” <http://www.biblestudytools.com/concordances/strong-exhaustive-concordance/> (accessed November 18, 2010).

being transformed, instructs us that the work of change is being done by someone other than ourselves and that the process will be done over time.²⁴ Paul tells us that this transformation will be “into his likeness with ever-increasing glory.”²⁵ Robert Jamieson states, “our change is from one degree of glory to another. As Moses’ face caught a reflection of God’s glory from being in His presence, so believers are changed into His image by beholding Him.”²⁶ Spiros Zodhiates adds, “the idea of transformation refers to an invisible process in Christians which takes place or begins to take place during their life in this age.”²⁷ To fulfill this mission of right relationship with God and the progressive transformation of our lives means healing, delivering and setting us increasingly free from the inner wounds that characterize human existence.²⁸

This mission of Christ was originally stated in Isaiah 61:1-3 and re-affirmed specifically by Jesus in His first sermon introducing His public ministry.²⁹ He came to “heal the brokenhearted and set the captives free.” God’s process of inner transformation based on Isaiah 61:1-3 includes Jesus’ desire through us and others to...

1. Preach good news to the poverty of your heart. (61:1)
2. Heal your broken heart. (61:1)
3. Proclaim freedom from your captivity. (61:1)

²⁴ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. S. 2 Co 3:18.

²⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:18.

²⁶ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory On the Old and New Testaments* (Hartford: Scranton and Co., 1871), under “S. 2Co 3.18,” <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/jamieson-fausset-brown/> (accessed November 15, 2010).

²⁷ Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, S. G3339.

²⁸ 2 Corinthians 10:4, Romans 7:15, Hebrews 12:15, Acts 8:23, Acts 5:1-3, Ephesians 4:26-27.

²⁹ Luke 4:18-19.

4. Release prisoners from your inner darkness. (61:1)
5. Proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (grace and love) to you and the day of God's revenge on all Satan's works. (61:2, 1 John 3:8)
6. Comfort your mourning and broken heart. (61:2)
7. Give a crown of beauty to you instead of the ashes of defeat and despair. (61:3)
8. Give the oil of gladness to you instead of unending loss and mourning. (61:3)
9. Clothe you with the spirit of praise instead of the spirit of depression, despair and heaviness. (61:3)

Jesus was clear about the intention of his teaching when he said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."³⁰ This quote from Isa. 61:1-2, focuses on the nature of Jesus' ministry. Isaiah is picturing the Jubilee year and the release of captives and the return from the Babylonian exile with the hope of the Messiah through it all. Jesus here applies this Messianic language to himself. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" as was shown at the baptism³¹ where he was also "anointed" for his mission by the Father's voice (3:22).³² He brings Good News to the oppressed and healing for those who

³⁰ Luke 4:18-19.

³¹ Luke 3:21.

³² Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. S. Lk 4:18.

hurt. When a person's life is set free, that person should experience life-change. Robertson suggests it is like "Prisoners of war who will be released."³³ When people are freed from spiritual or physical blindness their lives are expected to be transformed. Their perspective on life should change forever. The healing of the broken means to put back together those who are broken in heart and often in body as well. Robertson believes Jesus felt it to be his mission to mend broken hearts like pieces of broken earthenware, real rescue-mission work. Jesus mends them and sets them free from their limitations.³⁴

Jesus purposely omitted the final phrase of 61:2: "the day of vengeance of our God." Jesus introduces a day of grace, with forgiveness extended to all. Judgment is delayed till His return.³⁵ Jesus was announcing that today is a day of transformation, not judgment. D.A Carson writes, "He stressed the note of *present* fulfillment: what the prophet had foretold centuries before was now coming true. He taught that the prophecy had a *personal* fulfillment: the one anointed with the Spirit was Jesus himself. He also indicated that it was a *gracious* fulfillment: the era of God's salvation had now arrived."³⁶ Jesus was bringing change, not to a political system, but to peoples' lives.

Jesus came proclaiming a truth that would change a person's life forever, but there was a responsibility of the hearer if the change was going to be lasting.

³³ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, S. Lk 4:18.

³⁴ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, S. Lk 4:18.

³⁵ Lawrence O. Richards, *Bible Reader's Companion (Home Bible Study Library)* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: David C. Cook, 2002), S. 655.

³⁶ D.A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*. 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), S. Lk 4:16.

Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.³⁷

Hearing without doing is of little value. Jesus expected that what he taught would be put into practice. He goes even further. If you hear something that is good for you and you do not follow through you are considered foolish. Becoming wise is the repeated exercise of doing what Christ has taught us. It is evidence of our change and prepares us for greater change in the future.

When Jesus was interacting with an expert in the law who wanted to inherit eternal life, their conversation led to a question from the lawyer, "who is my neighbor?" To answer his question Jesus told the story we often label the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus establishes that loving our neighbor transcends economic or ethnic boundaries. We are to love the person who is in our proximity and in need. When the expert in the law correctly identified the man who had mercy on the Samaritan, Jesus challenged his inquirer "Go and do likewise."³⁸ To Jesus it was not enough to hear the truth. He wanted to do more than tell a dramatic story which shocked his audience--He wanted to change hearts and behavior. His desire was to move people from being governed by their economic and ethical boundaries to being people who loved like God loves. His intention was not

³⁷ Matthew 7:24-27.

³⁸ Luke 10:25-37.

eloquence, but transformation. He did not expect people to merely have a different thought, but to act in a different way. He expected people's lives to change when they encountered God's Word. The present active imperative command of Jesus was a call to action.³⁹ Robert Hughes and Carl Delany identify Jesus' expectations when they state,

The parable of the Good Samaritan illustrated the depth of God's love, while also calling everyone to show compassion in the same way. Jesus showed that a neighbor is anyone who is in need (10:37). The point of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–36) was made in 10:37. All are called to show compassion to those in need.⁴⁰

The response Jesus gave to a woman's words of blessing to the mother who bore Jesus was not thanks, but "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."⁴¹ Jesus pointed out that a physical relationship was unimportant compared with hearing and obeying the Word of God.⁴² It is clear that Jesus expected his follower's lives to be changed. To Jesus, an effective sermon resulted in people grasping the truth and putting it into action.

The same theme is echoed in the life of the Apostle Paul, a man whose life was overhauled when he had an encounter with Christ.

In Paul's letter to the Romans he informs them that God has a goal for every believer. He is purposely using all of life, the good things and the bad, to help fulfill his desire to conform

³⁹ Robert James Utley, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2004, Study Guide Commentary Series Volume 3A), S. Lk 10:37.

⁴⁰ Hughes and Laney, *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary*, S. 450.

⁴¹ Luke 11:27, 28.

⁴² Walvoord, et al., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, S. 2:236.

us into the image of his Son.⁴³ Paul uses a term συσχηματίζομαι, translated in the NIV as conformed, means to be similar or identical or to be in agreement or harmony with someone or something. Another concept of conformed is the idea of being obedient.⁴⁴ The expectation of God is that the follower of Christ is going to increasingly come into agreement and harmony with Christ and this will occur through obedience. Like a sculptor, God is the master craftsman who, when he looks at one of his followers, sees more than just who they are on a certain day. He sees an image that he is seeking to craft. Romans 8:29 teaches that God's goal is to conform us to the image of Christ. God's work as Robert Utley states is to restore broken people to Christlikeness,

This is a major truth of this passage. This is the goal of Christianity (cf. Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:13). Holiness is God's will for every believer. God's election is to Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4), not a special standing. The image of God which was given to humanity in creation (cf. Gen. 1:26; 5:1, 3; 9:6) is to be restored (cf. Col. 3:10).⁴⁵

Every person who becomes a child of the King is predestined, determined beforehand by the Sovereign God, to be shaped into the image of the one who purchased our salvation.⁴⁶ Paul tells us in Colossians 3:10 that Jesus is the template and we are being renewed into his likeness. Robertson states, "The restoration of the image of God in us is gradual and progressive (II Cor. 3:18), but will be complete in the final result (Rom. 8:29; I John 3:2)."⁴⁷ We do not lose our uniqueness, nor do we become clones. People are uniquely made, each

⁴³ Romans 8:28-29.

⁴⁴ Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, S. G4832.

⁴⁵ Robert James Utley, *The Gospel According to Paul: Romans* (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 1998, Study Guide Commentary Series Volume 5), S. Ro 8:29.

⁴⁶ Romans 8:29.

⁴⁷ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, S. Col 3:10.

with a distinct set of finger prints, each with a unique capacity to reflect the glory of the one who made us. But each one is being transformed.

Later in Romans 12:2, Paul commands us to be transformed. Robertson says the word, μεταμορφοῦσθε, means to change into another form, to transform, to transfigure.⁴⁸ Zodhiates states that to be transformed touches the essential nature of something and to transfigure a person.⁴⁹ The translation of Zodhiates suggests the word carries both an internal and external application. It means to change the outward form or appearance of something or to change in character or condition.⁵⁰ This transformation will affect how one thinks and behaves. It implies a major change in form, nature, or function.

Additionally, the present passive imperative gives the meaning to “keep on being transformed.” It means transformation is not a one-time event, but a process we enter, a journey we take.⁵¹ The context of this challenge indicates that the transformation is expected in every believer as an expression of worship. J.I. Packer, utilizing the Westminster Shorter Catechism, summarizes the implications of Paul’s exhortations.

Sanctification, says the Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q.35), is “the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.” The concept is not of sin being totally eradicated (that is to claim too much) or merely counteracted (that is to say too little), but of a divinely wrought character

⁴⁸ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), S. DBLG 3565, #2, <http://www.logos.com/product/693/a-dictionary-of-biblical-languages-w-semantic-domains-greek> (accessed November 19, 2010).

⁴⁹ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, S. Col. 3:10.

⁵⁰ Merriam-Webster, Inc: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Eleventh ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

⁵¹ Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, S. 2:487.

change freeing us from sinful habits and forming in us Christ-like affections, dispositions, and virtues.⁵²

When Paul was writing to the Corinthian church, which had its fair share of unpolished members, he assured them that they could live with hope. Though their lives were still marked by the stain of sin, something supernatural had occurred to them. A veil was taken away. This blinder to truth was removed by the power of the Spirit so they could live with a new freedom. The transformation refers to an invisible process in Christians which takes place or begins to take place during their life in this age.⁵³ This exciting transformation is not only commanded but is possible as we interact with the Word.

Warren Wiersbe comments on Paul's vision,

As we surrender body, mind, and will, the Lord transforms us from within so that we are not conformed to the world. As we behold Him in the Word (the mirror), we are "transfigured" by the Spirit "from glory to glory." The theological name for this experience is *sanctification*, the process by which we become more like the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the Father's goal for each of His children (Rom. 8:19; 1 John 3:2).⁵⁴

God's truth works from the inside out so that we who were committed to shameful ways have received this treasure in jars of clay to demonstrate the all-surpassing power of God. God's vision for us is transformation. It takes place over time, but it is his passion for those who are his children.⁵⁵

⁵² J. I Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1995), c1993.

⁵³ Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, S. G3339.

⁵⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), c1989, S. Lk 9:18.

⁵⁵ 2 Corinthians 4:1-12.

In his letter to the Colossian church, the Apostle Paul states that his mission is to present everyone perfect in Christ.⁵⁶ The term *perfect* means to be complete. He is not suggesting that we can be without sin, but fully finished in Christ. Paul's preaching and teaching has a goal beyond the specific information being taught. When he teaches he has aligned himself with the larger perspective of God to see the broken mended, the blind seeing and the estranged reconciled.

A similar message is affirmed when we read Paul's letter to the Philippian church. God gives us a promise that "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."⁵⁷ The assurance of this change is discovered in the indicative and imperative use of the promise. Robert Utley sheds insight here. "It is both a gift and a command! It is a position (objective) and an activity (subjective)! It is an INDICATIVE (a statement) and an IMPERATIVE (a command)! It comes at the beginning, but does not mature until the end."⁵⁸ The hope they could look forward to was the confident terms Paul expresses in Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16; and 3:20–21. Such transformation will be the cause for the Philippians to glory in Jesus Christ (2:16) and praise for God (1:10).⁵⁹

God wants to change us. He longs to complete the project of transformation. But it is not something that God will do apart from us. He works in cooperation with us. Paul

⁵⁶ Colossians 1:28.

⁵⁷ Philippians 1:6.

⁵⁸ Utley, *The Gospel According to Paul: Romans*, S. Rom 6:19.

⁵⁹ Roy B. Zuck, *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996), S. 324, <http://www.logos.com/product/135/a-biblical-theology-of-the-new-testament> (accessed October 24, 2010).

exhorts us to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling.”⁶⁰ *Work out* here has the sense of bringing to completion. It is not a matter of working *for* salvation.⁶¹ We have our part to do, but that is made possible by God’s work in us. The Greek word used here, and often by Paul for God’s power, is that from which we have our word ‘energy’. He gives both the desire and the strength to do what is pleasing to him. This is why Paul could be so confident and hopeful. God is going to supply desire and energy to accomplish his vision that we might be like Christ. We observe the truth of God’s Word and the Spirit produces a transformation of our souls bearing fruit which resembles the character of God. The preacher’s message then is a partnership with God and the individual to see this purpose realized.

So in summary, we have seen that it was Paul’s goal to teach and admonish toward the goal that every person would be perfect or complete in Christ. He states in Colossians 1:28 that his life and preaching were dedicated to the transformation of people. Romans 5:1-20 teaches that our transformation is first instantaneous, in our justification, and Philippians 2:12, 13 teaches that our transformation is also progressive in that our salvation is being worked out in our lives. The journey toward Christ-likeness is one every believer is on and the preacher is both partner and often tour guide through the preaching of God’s Word.

⁶⁰ Philippians 2:12.

⁶¹ Carson, *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, S. Philippians 2:12.

The Power of God's Word to Bring Transformation

God's word not only teaches us the vision for and definition of transformation, but it has also been given to us to be part of the transformational process. When you read the Bible it tells you how to live. It gives explicit instructions how a person can live so that their life will be blessed.⁶² It also records the history of God's work among his creation. Through this history we see the reality of God's existence, his character, his passion and are invited to enter into the story that God is currently writing. In addition to the propositional reality of God's Word it also has a subjective element in how it transforms a person's life. Coupled with the working of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God has the power to change us. We will see from a brief survey of the Scriptures that God's Word is powerful and intended to transform the life of the believer.

Psalm 19 declares that God's Word is perfect and it revives the soul. King David gives us insight into the power that God has given to his Word:

(1) The term **שׁוּב** translated as revives, according to Swanson, means to make linear motion back to a point previously departed. This movement can refer to restoration;⁶³

(2) The term **חָכַם** translated as making wise, according to Brown Driver Briggs means to “restrain from acting in an evil manner, or to make firm, sound decisions, free from defect.”⁶⁴

(3) The term **חֵפֶז**, translated as giving joy, “denotes being glad or joyful with the whole disposition as indicated by its association with the heart.”⁶⁵

⁶² Psalm 1, Matthew 5.

⁶³ J. Swanson. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew Old Testament*, 1997.

⁶⁴ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Brown-driver-briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 2000), under “S. 314,” <http://www.logos.com> (accessed November 20, 2010).

(4) The term אור translated as enlightening, according to Brown-Driver-Briggs means to “become light for the eyes.”⁶⁶

(5) The term זָהַר translated as warn, according to Brown-Driver-Briggs means to “give light, enlighten, instruct, admonish.”⁶⁷

The Word God gave us is like a huge treasure that when opened brings life, joy, wisdom, direction, protection and so much more. In John 17:17 is a prayer of Jesus where he asks that the Word would do its good work in our lives. John Walvoord comments on Jesus’ prayer, “The means of this sanctifying work is God’s truth. The truth is communicated in the Word, which is both personal and propositional. As the message about Jesus was heard, believed, and understood, the disciples’ hearts and minds were captured. This change in their thinking resulted in changes in their living.”⁶⁸ According to Jesus the Word has the power to both purify our lives and to set us apart for Godly ministry.

Paul tells us that the Bible, which is inspired by God, is profitable for teaching and reproof, correction and training so that servants of God can be equipped to do the work of God.⁶⁹ The main point of this passage is the usefulness of God’s Word to prepare people for the work of God. D.A. Carson provides a helpful summary of the profitability of God’s word,

The four functions of Scripture cover a wide range from imparting doctrine to challenging behavior and training in righteousness. These functions are still the

⁶⁵ R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, & B. K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 879.

⁶⁶ Brown, et al., *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, S. 21.

⁶⁷ Brown, et al., *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, S. 264.

⁶⁸ Walvoord, et al., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scripture*, S. 2:333.

⁶⁹ 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

valid purpose of Scripture and are vital in equipping *the man of God*, a term which stands particularly for all Christian teachers, but is applicable to every Christian worker.⁷⁰

The picture is similar to that of a parent who is disciplining their child. The Word that is shared is a training tool in the hand of a gentle teacher. It enables the child of God to become a man or woman of God, matured in the things of the Lord. The term ἄρτιος translated *thoroughly* in the NIV (v. 17) does not mean sinless; according to Zodhiates, it means sufficient or completely qualified.⁷¹ So, the Bible transforms the child of v. 15 into a mature person in Christ; it equips the saints to be servants.

As we look through the Scripture we see that the word has power—God inspired power. When a teacher aligns with the vision of God and accurately proclaims the Word of God—people will be changed. It is God’s desire and He has given us the tools to see His vision realized.

Preaching and Transformation

God has always chosen messengers to proclaim his word. He has sought out those who would be his mouthpiece. Preaching is the primary mode of communication God has chosen to reveal His truth recorded in the written Word of God. God has entrusted gifted teachers to

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will

⁷⁰ Carson, *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, S. 2 Tim 3:10.

⁷¹ Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, S. G739.

gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.⁷²

A brief examination will unfold that God has given the preacher the task to use His Word to help realize the vision of God—that believers will be conformed to the image of Christ.

What is Preaching?

In 1877 Phillips Brooks defined what remains a concise and helpful definition of preaching: “Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of those can it spare and still be preaching.”⁷³

The truth he is speaking of is the Scriptures rightly interpreted and actually communicated. The word personality reveals that God uses men or women to convey that truth. It means that a Biblical idea preached will always be unique, not in the truth proclaimed, but rather in the thumbprint of the speaker and how their personality will proclaim God’s truth and connect to the congregation. From early on in the story of humanity, God has called people to preach his word. Moses, in Deuteronomy 18:18, declares that God would “raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth and he will tell them everything I commanded him.” God has taken introverts and extroverts, willing and unwilling spokesmen to accomplish his task. Jonah rebelled against the calling of God but after his surrender the patient God recommissioned his prophet, “Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time: ‘Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to

⁷² 2 Timothy 4:2, 3.

⁷³ Philip Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching: Delivered Before the Divinity School of Yale College* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1907).

it the message I give you.”⁷⁴ James Smith identifies an important truth from Jonah’s life: “Jonah was to ‘proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you.’ God has never sent a messenger without a message. Those who make the claim to be spokesmen for God had better make sure that what they speak comes from God. Only this kind of preaching accomplishes the divine purpose.”⁷⁵

In the English Standard Version the actual word, *preach* and its various forms are found seven times in the Old Testament. A closer look at the Hebrew words translated as “preach” in the Old Testament will add clarity to the concept. The Hebrew word נָטַף (nā-tāp) means to pour down, gently fall, drip, i.e., the movement of liquid or mass in a downward motion, implying an abundant state, or to speak with appeal, formally, drip, i.e., speak information or revelation which may be accepted, as an extension of a mass or liquid dripping and finally to preach or prophesy.⁷⁶

Another term used קָרָא [*qara*’ /kaw·raw/] “is rendered ‘preach’ in Neh. 6:7, ‘Thou hast appointed prophets to preach (*i.e.* proclaim) of thee at Jerusalem, saying, ‘There is a king in Judah’, Jonah 3:2, ‘Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.’ It is usually rendered to call, cry, name, bid, invite, proclaim, publish. It also signifies to read aloud, the only kind of reading ever referred to in the O.T.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Jonah 3:1.

⁷⁵ James E. Smith, *The Minor Prophets* (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1992), S. Jon 3:1-4.

⁷⁶ Brown, et al., *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. S. 642.2.

⁷⁷ R. B. Girdlestone, *Girdlestone's Synonyms of the Old Testament* (Oak Harbor: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), S. 223.

A lesser used word is **בָּשָׂר** [*basar* /baw·sar/], used in Isaiah 61:1, ‘To preach good tidings to the meek;’ and in the same verse Kara is rendered ‘proclaim’ — ‘to proclaim liberty to the captives.’ Basar is rendered preach in one other passage, namely, Psalm 40:9, ‘I have preached righteousness in the great congregation.’ Here the use of the word is important. It was not a mere proclamation of righteousness, but the announcing of good tidings concerning righteousness.⁷⁸

Moses, Isaiah, Amos and other prophets proclaimed God’s Word beckoning the listeners to come and surrender. They understood that a divine power accompanied their assignment to preach. Moses was called to communicate God’s Word to an enslaved people in order to lead them out of Egypt and later God laid his mantel on Samuel to bring a Word to a people who would often reject Him. Later the Lord called Isaiah: “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’”⁷⁹ God spoke to a shepherd and called him into the ministry of proclaiming his word. Amos was not trained for his position, but he was called and spoke the words God gave him with authority: “I was neither a prophet nor a prophet’s son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go and prophesy to my people Israel.’”⁸⁰

The phrase “thus saith the Lord” was the ultimate of the authority of God for the prophet. It was imperative that each of the preachers understood the authority of God’s

⁷⁸ Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, S. 222.

⁷⁹ Isaiah 6:8.

⁸⁰ Amos 3:8, 7:14-15.

Word because they were keenly aware of their own frailty. In Jonah 2:7, he speaks of his life that was ebbing away. He identified with those who would cling to worthless idols and forfeit the grace of God that could be theirs. H.L. Wilmington speaks of Jonah's realization, "Inside the fish, Jonah was in great despair. Yet when he realized that God had miraculously saved him from drowning, he prayed and repented of his rebellion and acknowledged God as the only source of salvation."⁸¹ In addition, Jonah was angry that God would show mercy to a people he hated. Jonah 4:1-3 records his confession and acknowledgement that he did not want to preach because he knew God's word was going to be effective. But out of obedience he warned and confronted the wayward heart. The preachers instructed people who were far from God how to come home.⁸² They implored those who were living in luxury to consider God's house.⁸³ When the people of God needed a lesson on the value and importance of His Word to their daily lives Moses said to Israel,

Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers.² Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.⁸⁴

⁸¹ H.L. Wilmington, *Wilmington's Bible Handbook* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997), S. 475.

⁸² Daniel 4:19-27; Hosea 4:1-19; Jonah 3:1-10.

⁸³ Haggai 1:1-11.

⁸⁴ Deuteronomy 8:1-3.

Moses not only helped them see the essential need for the Word, but also the importance of doing it. He told the people of God, “Impress these words of Mine on your hearts and souls, bind them as a sign on your hands, and let them be a symbol on your foreheads.”⁸⁵ He was telling them to not just hear the Bible but keep what they had received all through the day. The powerful Word of God was proclaimed by sinful men and women who were sovereignly called and equipped to announce God’s truth. Life-changing truth was preached by men for men.

In contrast to the few times the Old Testament uses *preach*, the English Standard Version of the New Testament applies the word *preach* and its various forms one hundred and forty two times. Timothy is exhorted to κηρύσσω the Word. It means to preach, to herald, to proclaim, announce publicly. In the sense of to publish abroad, announce publicly, especially to preach, publish, or announce religious truth, the gospel with its attendant privileges and obligations, the gospel dispensation.⁸⁶ To preach a Word from God was likened to an ambassador representing his country to other dignitaries. The spokesman was sent with authority to speak a word from the King or ruler. The word was official and was to be taken with the utmost seriousness. Therefore when a preacher stands before a congregation it is no ordinary moment. There is an important word that is being communicated from a King that longs for his citizens to hear and obey.

⁸⁵ Deuteronomy 10:18.

⁸⁶ Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, S. G2784.

In addition to the term κηρύσσω, there are over 30 other words that reference the preaching task of the pastor, teacher.⁸⁷ One such word that is used 54 times in the New Testament is εὐαγγελίζω. It means to bring good news, good will, to proclaim or tell, to evangelize, proclaim the good news, and preach the gospel. It was at the time that the first Christians were “scattered abroad, and went about preaching the Word” after the martyrdom of Stephen (he being one of the seven), that the verb εὐαγγελίζω to publish the good tidings or good news, was used by Luke in Acts 8:4, 12, 25, 35, 40.⁸⁸ Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch teaching and preaching (εὐαγγελίζω) the word of the Lord, with many others also.

In addition to εὐαγγελίζω are two other cognates καταγγέλλω and ἀναγγέλλω which together occur in the New Testament 86 times. All of the words in the ἄγγελος family affirm the idea that the message is from royalty and therefore it carries significance and authority. Michael Fabarez notes “All three words naturally draw our linguistic minds toward the root word translated “angel”—a heavenly messenger dispatched by God to take to mankind a message from the King of kings.”⁸⁹ Like angels dispatched from heaven to declare God's word, so the preacher is to εὐαγγελίζω the Word of God with heavenly authority.

⁸⁷ Kittel Gerhard and Friedrich Gerhard, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Volume I), (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964). Identifies over 30 illustrative words under various headings.

⁸⁸ Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, S. G2097.

⁸⁹ Michael Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, Nashville Tennessee (Thomas Nelson, Inc. 2002), 7-8.

Another word that is often found with other exhortations to preach is the verb διδάσκω. It means to teach or to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them.⁹⁰ Διδάσκω has inherent in it the intent to influence the understanding of the person who is taught.⁹¹ When Paul exhorts Timothy to exercise his gift he was to preach and διδάσκω. This exhortation came with the authority of heaven because a prophetic message was given when the elders laid their hands on the aspiring pastor. The brief study of διδάσκω teaches us that the one who would proclaim the truth of God's word should expect an impact on the recipients' behavior.

So we have seen from a study of the words translated "Preach" that preaching is intended to be a sharing of revelation from God presented in a way that it remains true to the desire of God and is connected to the people of God. The preacher shares words that convey God's truth to the practical needs of the listeners. It is a timely word that meets them in both desperate and daily needs. It is a word that comes with authority because it is the Word of God. It comes with power because the teacher is proclaiming news that is from God and about God. It is a call from broken people who understand the desperate need of a Word from God. The scriptures affirm what has always been true that God will call people to proclaim the truth to people. We finish in this section where we began with the concise and helpful definition from Philip Brooks:

Preaching is the proclamation of the word of God to men by men under assignment from God. It is the ordained means for the transmission of the word of God to a lost

⁹⁰ Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, S. G1321.

⁹¹ Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 1321.

world; it serves also as an official means of grace for the building up and strengthening of the church of Christ.

Preaching is truth through personality; it may be largely didactic (to teach), or else to lead to faith (to convict and convince) and to motivate (leading to obedience and godly action). Preaching is truth on fire, radically different from a secular lecture or talk; through it the power of God is revealed unto the salvation of souls.⁹²

Why Preach?

In a culture that has produced more books than ever before and with the numerous translations and millions of copies of the Bible available it is fair to ask, “Why do we need preachers of God’s Word?” With all the media options and creative communication methods is not preaching an archaic discipline that has passed its time? Michael Fabarez speaks of such a voice when he states,

A popular mantra rings, “If we are to win our generation we must redefine how church is done.” Best-selling titles by liberals and conservatives warn us that it is time for the church to ‘change or die!’ No longer is the church the place where God confronts and comforts His people by means of weekly exposition and application of His timeless Word. It is not a gathering driven and shaped by the latest marketing techniques, based on focus groups and polling data.”

One could argue that with today’s trained shorter attention span, preaching is an upward battle. One might even cite adult learning research that suggests what a person hears orally they only retain 5% of the information communicated.⁹³ This information alone should cause a preacher sobriety when it comes to believing preaching can make a difference in a person’s life. So why preach?

⁹² Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching: Delivered Before the Divinity School of Yale College*, 1907.

⁹³ Bethel Learning Pyramid, National Training Laboratories, Bethel, Maine, www.learningandteaching.info/learning/myths.htm, (accessed January 2010).

The most straight forward answer to this question would be, “In I Timothy 4:13, preaching is commanded by God.” It is not an option; it is a calling of God that He has placed on certain people in the body of Christ. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, “Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.”⁹⁴ Preaching was not an option for Paul if he were to remain faithful and obedient to God. As today, there were many excuses as to why preaching may have not made sense, but God was not interested in the excuses, He had called his disciple to preach His Word and He promised that the proclaimed Word would make an impact. Jonah was told to “Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you.”⁹⁵ There were cultural barriers that would get in the way of the communicated word. There were motivational barriers in the heart of the preacher that would surely lessen the impact of the preached word. But God still said preach. Paul’s charge to Timothy to preach serves as an additional illustration of a person who responded to the calling of God, “And so I solemnly urge you before God and before Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he appears to set up his Kingdom, to preach the Word of God urgently at all times, whenever you get the chance, in season and out, when it is convenient and when it is not.”⁹⁶

There is a second reason we have for the daunting task of preaching exemplified in the relationship between Philip and a pre-Christian eunuch. The Spirit instructs Philip to go to a certain place where he encountered a man who was studying the Word of God but

⁹⁴ I Corinthians 9:16.

⁹⁵ Jonah 3:2.

⁹⁶ 2 Timothy 4:1-2.

needed explanation. “Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ Philip asked. ‘How can I,’ he said, ‘unless someone explains it to me?’ So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.”⁹⁷ In the interaction between Philip and the eunuch we see that the teacher helps to explain the Word. Gifted preachers help to make the inspired Word of God accessible to people so that they can not only understand it, but so they can live it. Without the preacher the eunuch would have not understood what he was reading. More importantly he would have never been able to be saved and have the Spirit of God cleanse his heart.

We preach not because of our eloquence, but because we have a command of God. We speak not because of our wisdom, but because of the power of the Living God to take his Word and through frail people change hearts and transform lives. We speak to people on behalf of God who has called us and because His grace has empowered us.

A third reason to preach is because of the emphasis the Bible puts on preaching. Of the twenty-eight chapters in the book of Acts eighteen contain reports of sermons that were preached. The first recorded sermon in Acts 2 was the catalyst that saw about three thousand people trust Christ.⁹⁸ As Paul traveled from city to city he preached the gospel and often stayed in town working during the day and preaching at night.⁹⁹ Preaching was central to the advancement of the early church. It has always been critical to the people of

⁹⁷ Acts 8:30-31.

⁹⁸ Acts 2:41.

⁹⁹ Acts 17:16-34.

God. When a ruler needed to be rebuked God sent a man to preach.¹⁰⁰ When a city needed to repent God sent a prophet to proclaim His Word.¹⁰¹ When Peter was trying to steady a persecuted church he reminded them of the Word that was preached to them.¹⁰² It is clear that preaching has always been central to God's people.

Without preaching people are quick to make up their own set of rules and create their own Gods. The bent of the human heart, even the redeemed one, is independence. We long to be self-sufficient and need to be reminded that God alone is complete. Preaching brings us back to the reality of who God is and who we are. Preaching interprets the written Word of God and enables people to know Him and what He desires. Preaching creates understanding in the mind and moves us to feeling in the heart. As John Piper states, "There is seeing God and there is savoring God. You can't separate these. You must see him to savor him. And if you don't savor him when you see him, you insult him."¹⁰³ When the preacher puts God on display she enables the followers of God to worship. When the preacher unfolds the text and the listener gains a clear view of God our hearts are moved and our lives are changed. We move from facts about Jesus to being captured by his life, moved in our hearts by his love, compelled in our lives to worship him. When we see the glory of our Lord we are moved to do the unnatural—we are moved to

¹⁰⁰ II Samuel 12:1-4.

¹⁰¹ Jonah 1:1-2.

¹⁰² I Peter 1:23, 25.

¹⁰³ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Baker Books 1990), 10.

savor Christ.¹⁰⁴ That is why we preach so that the corporate body of Christ may see God and savor Him in our hearts.

Lives have been changed through preaching, nations have been shaped by the proclamation of God's Word. Over the centuries the preacher's word has had a significant influence on art, music, architecture and life styles of people. Some argue that the rise and fall of nations can be traced to people who have faithfully announced God's Word.¹⁰⁵ Why preach? Because God has commanded us to do so and has demonstrated both in His Word and through time that his Word will not come back void."¹⁰⁶

From the day we received the imperishable seed of the Holy Spirit we are on a journey of transformation. It is marked by progress and failure. It is described in Romans 7:7-25 as a battle between our inner being and the members of our body. Like any civil war there are wins and losses. So it is in our journey toward Christlikeness. God is working to form in us the likeness of His Son. All Biblical preaching understands this vision, and seeks to enter into people's lives helping them along the way.

¹⁰⁴ John 12:1-8.

¹⁰⁵ Edwin Dargan, *A History of Preaching, Volume 1: From the Apostolic Fathers to the Great Reformers, A.D. 70-1572* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1968), 8-10.

¹⁰⁶ Isaiah 55:11.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores the relationship of preaching and transformation. While most people would agree it is hard to measure personal change in the same way that one can record sales, it is nonetheless important to evaluate the effectiveness of one's preaching. As preachers, are we merely gathering a crowd, or is our preaching part of the God-ordained process of sanctification?

The nature of transformation is subjective, and in contemporary society, the motivation of preachers is under great suspicion. People are not as trusting as they might have been in the past. Their defenses are more pronounced, and they are on guard for manipulation. Haddon Robinson states it well concerning the fractured trust of people in relation to the preacher.

A century ago, the pastor was looked to as the person of wisdom and integrity in the community. Authority lay in the office of pastor. The minister was the parson, often the best educated person in town and the one to whom people looked for help in interpreting the outside world. He had the unique opportunity to read and study and often was the principal voice in deciding how the community should react in any moral or religious situation.

But today, the average citizen takes a different view of pastors and preachers. Perhaps we're not lumped with scam artists or manipulative fund raisers, but we face an Olympic challenge to earn respect, credibility, and authority.¹

This spells hard times for the preacher, because one must not only work with the fractured trust level of the congregation but also give significant attention to motivational factors in regard to helping people understand what the Word of God requires and why it is

¹ Haddon W. Robinson, *Making a Difference in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI. Baker, 1999), 31.

in people's best interest to obey what God is telling them. This chapter will explore various areas that affect the relationship of preaching to personal change both for the one who preaches and for those who gather to hear the gospel proclaimed.

Transformation versus Change

What does it mean to be transformed? It is helpful to distinguish between a change, which can occur when I adjust my thinking on a given point, versus transformation which speaks to something more profound and addresses a person's value system and their attitudes. Robert Marzano speaks of this transformational change as "Second-Order Change."² Marzano says "Second-Order Change" "lies outside existing paradigms" and it "requires the acquisition of new knowledge and skills." When speaking of the ability to experience transformation he states, "the resources currently are not available to those responsible for implementing the innovations."³ This means transformation is not just a change of mind, but a metamorphosis which requires a power from outside of ourselves to achieve the desired transformation. James McGregor Burns adds to the clarification between change and transformation.

We must distinguish here between the verbs "change" and "transform," using exacting definitions. To change is to substitute one thing for another.... But to transform something cuts much more profoundly. It is to cause a metamorphosis in form or structure, a change in the very condition or nature of a thing, a change into another substance, a radical change in outward form or

² Robert J. Marzano, Timothy Waters, and Brian A. McNulty, *School Leadership that Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Assoc. for Supervision and Curriculum, 2005), 113.

³ Marzano, et al., *School Leadership that Works*, 113.

inner character.... It is change of this breadth and depth that is fostered by transforming leadership.⁴

According to Burns, change addresses specific behaviors whereas transformation addresses values, a person's mind-set and the attitudes that drive and direct behavior.

The implications are significant. Transformation by Burns and Marzano's definition is a process, not a specific act. Sid Buzzell notes that when the preacher targets transformation and not just change, it will alter their sermons and how they prepare their preaching calendars.

The failure to see the difference between change and transformation accounts for the fact that we too often short circuit the process of growth by impatiently working for change and not taking the longer-range view of transformation. Our preaching calendars should have built into them the fact that transformation takes multiple exposures over time to key biblical ideas and the specific actions and values people need to cultivate in order to see those transformations take place. One sermon on Love or Evangelism produces little change because these actions only grow out of a "Transformation" of values and attitudes.⁵

Preaching as It Relates to Personal Transformation

Transformed Preachers: Experiencing Transformation

"The character of the preacher has a profound impact upon the content of the sermons that they preach."⁶ This statement by J. Kent Edwards might find complete agreement by all who preach, but the implications might be missed by more than a few. If the character of preachers affects the sermons they preach, then every preacher has to be

⁴ James McGregor Burns, *Leadership*. (London, UK: Harper Torchbooks, 1978), 14.

⁵ Sid Buzzell, email message to author, January 19, 2011.

⁶ J. Kent Edwards, *Deep Preaching* (Nashville: B& H Academic, 2009), 43.

experiencing personal transformation if he wants to preach transformational messages. Because preachers speak from the overflow of their hearts, the issue of transformation is essential.⁷

It will be hard to expect change in listeners if none is being experienced in the preacher. It is hard to speak of God's glory and power when the preacher is mired in mediocrity. John Piper exhorts preachers: "Don't be content to guide people among the foothills of his glory. Become a mountain climber on the cliffs of God's majesty, and let the truth begin to overwhelm you so that you will never exhaust the heights of God."⁸ It seems that transformation must first be a practice before it can be preached. A personal encounter with the Lord must precede public proclamation to the congregation. Encounters with God must be common for the preacher, or her preaching will be reduced to communicating contrived views of God. Bishop William Willimon states, "Thin descriptions of God are killing us. He is loving and compassionate, yet the Scripture reveals him as utterly powerful. Mysterious is our God."⁹ Preachers can hardly declare the glory of this mysterious God unless they have first encountered him. "Preaching," as Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "is about letting the living Christ walk among his people."¹⁰ When preachers allow the transcendent God to grip their lives, that reality changes the way they communicate.

⁷ Luke 6:45; Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

⁸ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 63.

⁹ William H. Willimon, "The Art of Transformational Preaching" (sermon, Festival of Homiletics, Nashville, TN, May 21-25, 2007), <http://homiletics.impactlearning.org/store/seminar/seminar.php?seminar=5385> (accessed November 15, 2010).

¹⁰ Willimon, *The Art of Transformational Preaching*, 2007.

One of the great perils for preachers is that the message of Christ remains in their heads without touching their hearts. The apostle Paul warns, “Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”¹¹ John Henry Jowett rightly notes:

The Apostle Paul foresees the possible peril of his becoming a counterfeit coin in the sacred currency, a spurious dealer in sublime realities, a worthless guide to “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” He sees the insurgent danger of men who are busy among holy things becoming profane. A man may be dealing with “gold thrice refined,” and yet he himself may be increasingly mingled with the dross of the world. He may lead others into the heavenly way and he may lose the road himself. He may be diligent in his holy calling and yet be deepeningly degenerate. It is the ominous forecast of what is perhaps life’s saddest and most pathetic tragedy, the spectacle of a man who, having “preached to others,” should himself become “a castaway.”¹²

Jowett recognizes the ease of becoming familiar with the practice of preaching and distant from God. He cautions against becoming “professors but not pilgrims” whose “studies may be workshops instead of ‘upper rooms.’”¹³

This line of thinking was paramount also for Richard Baxter, who often told his students that before they taught others, they must first give oversight of themselves.¹⁴ To give oversight of oneself means to tend to the issues of one’s heart. The preacher seeks to move the message of Christ from one’s head to one’s heart. Baxter warns the preacher of three areas that require special attention. The first is to take heed to oneself, lest one be void

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 9:26-27.

¹² John Henry Jowett, *The Preacher: His Life and Work* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1912), 41-42.

¹³ Jowett, *The Preacher: His Life and Work*, 45.

¹⁴ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1982), 27.

of the saving grace of God. It is a great danger to preach about grace without having experienced the work of Christ in one's own life. Second, the preacher must make sure he is not living with sins against which he preaches. To proclaim the power of God while not walking in victory leaves one open to mental assent but experiencing no power of God. Few things will deaden the passion of preachers and quench the power of the Spirit more quickly than to preach against things they have never tasted. Third, Baxter warns preachers of being unfit for the task they have undertaken.¹⁵ This last warning is surely open for discussion as to what makes a person fit to preach. But there is a certain amount of knowledge, a level of maturity to weather the temptations of the enemy, and a commitment to develop the skills God has given if preachers are to endure well in this calling to preach the gospel. If we as preachers are unwilling to give oversight to ourselves, Satan's traps have a greater possibility of sidelining our gifts.

It is this fear of a shipwrecked life that punctuates the need for the transformational preacher to begin with her own heart. Howard Hendricks affirms this principle in his first law of teaching: "If you stop growing today, you stop teaching tomorrow."¹⁶ He goes on to say, "[God] wants to work through you, but he can't until he works in you."¹⁷ With this conviction it should always be possible to ask the preacher, "How have you changed lately?" Transformation should not be just the goal of the preacher; it should be the experience. Repentance should not be just a doctrine preached but a practice of the preacher

¹⁵ Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 29-30.

¹⁶ Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 1987), 17.

¹⁷ Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives*, 18.

who is getting closer to God.¹⁸ There is no foolproof way to prevent disqualification, but the pursuit of spiritual change in one's life goes a long way toward preventing shipwreck.

Those who preach God's Word will do well to avoid a mind-only religion in favor of experiencing personal transformation on a regular basis. This means that practicing the spiritual disciplines is essential for the transformational preacher. Michael Fabarez shares insight into bad habits that can lead to a wilted heart:

For many of us, this tendency begins in seminary or Bible school, where the intimacy of spiritual "devotions" or "quiet times" is replaced by studying for the next Old Testament exam. At first we hardly feel the effects of this transition because our minds are stimulated by daily discoveries in the classroom. Eventually, though, we are bound to feel the ministerial impotence caused by the deprivation of our intimate time with Christ. Meager snatches of personal prayer and Bible study simply cannot sustain an effective ministry.¹⁹

All biblical study is good and essential, but sermon preparation time alone is insufficient to meet the high personal demands of preaching that changes lives. While sermon preparation will feed the soul, by most accounts it seems necessary for preachers to spend time in the Word for the nurture of their own lives. Fabarez concludes, "Therefore, a clear distinction must be made between the spiritual dividends yielded from Bible study pursued in preparation for teaching and Bible study pursued for personal enrichment."²⁰ A steady diet of God's Word nourishes the soul, strengthens convictions, and sharpens resistance to the snares of the enemy. A daily study of God's Word for personal growth delights the heart and must never be squeezed out of the preacher's schedule.

¹⁸ Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 44.

¹⁹ Michael Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 32.

²⁰ Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 33.

In addition to a steady diet of God's Word, the preacher whose life is being renewed by God will engage in intimate moments of prayer. "The secret prayer of the preacher and the concerts of prayer among the people conspire in the mercy of God to bring down the demonstration of the Spirit and of power."²¹

Jonathan Edwards knew something of the power of God both in his life and in his ministry. Much of that power could be attributed to his conviction on prayer. In his sermon "The Most High, a Prayer-Hearing God," Edwards says, "God has been pleased to constitute prayer to be antecedent to the bestowment of mercy; and he is pleased to bestow mercy in consequence of prayer, as though he were prevailed on by prayer."²² A preacher's life is dependent upon the mercy of God, and therefore the preacher must labor daily in prayer to invite the work of God first in his heart and then in his congregation. Fabarez states well the need for intimate prayer: "The ambassador must be intimately engaged with the One who sent him, or the distance between the two will soon become evident to all. Since the empowerment gained from time spent in prayer cannot be successfully manufactured, any pretense of intimacy will come across as artificial."²³

When preachers can identify the places in which God has changed them, it becomes more natural that their preaching will help to bring about the same kind of change in their listeners. When the Word and the Spirit have chiseled away at preachers' hearts,

²¹ Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 98.

²² Jonathan Edwards, Quoted in Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 98.

²³ Fabarez, *Preaching that Changes Lives*, 33.

there is a passion in their preaching that imparts that same hope to those who hear God's Word preached.

Transformed People: Expecting Transformation in Listeners

All of us as human beings have dreams for our lives. Those dreams may involve family, work, or fulfilling some deep passion. We want to accomplish something of meaning and know that we have lived a life of significance. Yet, we are often disappointed that our dreams are not fulfilled and we do not accomplish what we had wished. We all realize the need for change in order to see our dreams become reality. We need to be reminded that change is possible.

We Christians need a clear trumpet of hope that Christ can shape His image in us on earth. As Tim Chester notes, we need to be reminded that "Jesus is not only my example but also my Redeemer."²⁴ This hope gives the conviction that, as Chester's book title declares, "You can change." Chester believes that personal change occurs in the lives of believers when they turn to see the glory of God in Jesus. He writes, "We 'see' the glory of Christ as we 'hear' the gospel of Christ."²⁵ His statement gives preachers significant hope, for when they paint a picture of the glory of Christ, significant things can happen in the lives of their listeners.

The good news of the kingdom carried a word of repentance and offered peace, life, hope, reconciliation, and joy. Jesus' disciples were commissioned to preach²⁶ the same life-

²⁴ Tim Chester, *You Can Change* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 16.

²⁵ Chester, *You Can Change*, 19.

²⁶ Mark 3:14, Luke 10:1.

giving message that the Savior had preached. They were challenged to offer not fine platitudes that would make for a comfortable life, but words that contain the life-giving message of God. They were to be preachers sent out to proclaim what they had witnessed with their own eyes.²⁷ They told others, “He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.”²⁸ They proclaimed the word of the Lord, which would redeem people from sin and bondage. They were announcing wisdom to the ignorant, peace to the troubled, and freedom to prisoners. They were entrusted with “the living and enduring word of God.”²⁹

Paul would mentor the other preachers he had invited to join the team. His exhortation to young Timothy is worthy of hearing today: “Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.”³⁰ Behind this exhortation was not only Paul’s experience of seeing lives changed through the preaching of God’s Word but more importantly the inspired words of God: “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”³¹

There was purpose and therefore deep conviction in Paul’s preaching. He preached as if lives depended on it—because they did. He preached for the purpose of conversion. He preached for the purpose of sanctification. He preached for the purpose of worship. He

²⁷ Luke 24:45-49, Acts 1:8.

²⁸ Acts 10:42.

²⁹ 1 Peter 1:23.

³⁰ 1 Timothy 4:13.

³¹ Romans 10:14.

preached with purpose. Transformational preachers not only experience the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit but also preach toward that end for the sake of their people.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones offers similar thoughts: “The moment you consider man’s real need, and also the nature of salvation announced and proclaimed in the Scriptures, you are driven to the conclusion that the primary task of the church is to preach and to proclaim this, to show man’s real need, and to show the only remedy, the only cure for it.”³²

It is easy to fall into the trap of having a good outline and parsing the verbs but never defining where the sermon is going. There is a need to examine and to stress the purpose of one’s preaching, or one might land in a sea of vague generalities that produce informed but directionally challenged disciples. As Jay E. Adams writes, “The members of congregations, who are subjected to purposeless preaching for any length of time both individually and corporately, themselves, become aimless and confused.”³³ Adams also states:

The purpose of preaching then is to effect changes among the members of God’s church that build them up individually and that build up the body as a whole. Individually, good pastoral preaching helps each person in the congregation to grow in his faith, conforming his life more and more to biblical standards. Corporately, such preaching builds up the church as a body in relationship of the parts to the whole, and the whole to God and to the world.³⁴

Preaching will certainly convey information, but if it remains only the passing of facts with no impetus toward change, then preaching falls far short of God’s intended purpose. Andy Stanley states there are three possibilities when it comes to preaching. The

³² D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971), 26.

³³ Jay E. Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 1.

³⁴ Adams, *Preaching with Purpose*, 1.

first one is to “teach the Bible to people.” The goal here is to teach the facts so that people understand what the text is saying. The second goal he identifies is to “teach people the Bible.” This goal differs from the first in that the communicator is considerate of the audience when the sermon is preached. The preacher is concerned about being understood and communicating in a way that listeners can remember what has been communicated. The third purpose of preaching, which Stanley says should be the purpose of transformational preachers, is to “teach people how to live a life that reflects the values, principles, and truths of the Bible.”³⁵

But preaching with purpose is not only hard work; it is also risky, as Joseph M.

Stowell III notes:

Preaching to convey information is predictable and unthreatening. Preaching to effect transformation is hard work and risky business. Yet that is the whole point of preaching. An effective sermon is measured not by its polished technique but by the ability of the preacher to connect the Word to the reality of the listener’s life. Preachers and sermons can be funny, entertaining, enthralling, intriguing, intellectually stimulating, controversial, full of impressive theological doctrinal footpaths, and authoritative. But if ultimately the outcome does not result in a changed life because of an encounter with truth, then it has not been what God intended preaching to be.³⁶

For some preachers, the results they get are due simply to their expectations being fulfilled. They exchange the expectancy of God doing great things for getting through another sermon. When preachers lower their expectations, they can steadily lead their congregants into a life of mediocrity. J. I. Packer speaks to the malady of low expectations:

³⁵ Andy Stanley and Lane Jones, *Communicating for Change* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2006), 93-94.

³⁶ Joseph M. Stowell III, *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 125.

Low expectations become self-fulfilling. Where little is expected from sermons, little is received. Many moderns have never been taught to expect sermons to matter much, and so their habit at sermon time is to relax, settle back and wait to see if anything the preacher says will catch their interest. Most of today's congregations and preachers seem to be at one in neither asking nor anticipating that God will come to meet his people in the preaching; so it is no wonder if this fails to happen. According to your unbelief, we might say be it unto you!³⁷

Transformational preaching will be done by men and women who have experienced the renewing work of God in their own lives and because of their love for people preach toward that end for the sake of people. Their sermons have purpose and direction toward change that edges people ever closer to Christ. They do this because they are declaring the Word of God that has the power to correct, train, and prepare believers for God's good work.

Transformational Preaching and our Authority

When preachers stand in front of the congregation, they must realize that how people relate to the Bible, how they see truth, and how they view authority in general is different from the views that were common fifty years ago. More than thirty years ago, Carl F. H. Henry noticed a significant change in society:

We sit glued to television sets, unmindful that ancient pagan rulers staged Coliseum circuses to switch the minds of the restless ones from the realities of a spiritually-vagrant empire to the illusion that all is basically well.... We are so steeped in the antichrist philosophy—namely, that success consists in embracing not the values of the Sermon on the Mount but an infinity of material things, of sex and status—that we have little sense how much of what passes for practical Christianity is really an apostate compromise with the spirit of the age.... Our culture is lost to the truth of God, to the reality of divine revelation, to the content of God's will, to the power of His redemption, and to the authority of His Word. For this loss it is paying dearly in

³⁷ David Jackman, *Preaching the Living Word* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1999), 31.

a swift relapse to paganism. The savages are stirring again; you can hear them rumbling and rustling in the tempo of our times.³⁸

The Bible has been replaced as the authority in contemporary culture, and in its place people have set up themselves as the captains of their souls, a situation that Thomas C. Oden has described as “autonomous individualism.”³⁹ The sovereign God has been replaced with the sovereign self.

In this me-centered world, Richard Lischer notes, experiences and feelings trump the Bible. “What has happened is that the authority for ethical decision making has become my story, my journey, my experiences and my feelings.”⁴⁰ It seems that biblical authority, for many people, is a distant memory. It is in this context that the biblical preacher is called to declare not what people feel, not an exposition on human experiences, but a word from God.

The preacher always stands first and foremost on the authority of God’s Word. He comes in the name of Christ offering to be a witness to God’s Word. Thomas Long provides helpful insight:

To say that the preacher acts in Christ’s name is to say more than the mere notion that the preacher is an agent for distant authority. Christ is present in and with the church, and all ministries, including preaching, are expressions of his presence. Preaching does not cause Christ to be present. It is possible only because Christ is already present, and to speak in Christ’s name is to claim Christ’s own promise, “the one who hears you, hears me” (Luke 10:16).⁴¹

³⁸ Carl F. H. Henry, “The Barbarians Are Coming,” *ABE Journal* 2, no. 2 (June 1994): 3-4.

³⁹ Thomas C. Oden, “On Not Whoring after the Spirit of the Age,” in *No God but God:*

Breaking with the Idols of Our Age, ed. Os Guinness and John Seel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 193.

⁴⁰ Richard Lischer, “The Limits of Story,” *Interpretation* 38, no. 1 (January 1984), 26-38.

⁴¹ Thomas G. Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 23.

The preacher's authority is not in his eloquence, charisma, or education. Instead, authority is established when the preacher declares himself to be a witness to God's Word. God has given his Word power—the power to change a life. Fabarez adds, "Our work each Sunday should provide a singular and crystal clarity for God's voice—not ours. When we preach God's Word it effects God's changes."⁴² Louis Berkhof writes, "All our knowledge of God is derived from his self-revelation in nature and in Scripture."⁴³ To this Millard Erickson adds, "By the authority of the Bible we mean that the Bible as the expression of God's will to us, possesses the right supremely to define what we are to believe and how we are to conduct ourselves."⁴⁴ When we as preachers proclaim God's Word, we are dealing with a divine book written by an all-powerful God. William Barclay explains, "In Jewish thought a word was more than a sound expressing a meaning, a word actually did things. The word of God is not simply a sound, it is an effective cause."⁴⁵ This means that God's Word is fundamentally more powerful and effectual than the preacher's words. The very reading of God's Word can bring conviction and repentance. The effect of a person's ministry over time as he teaches from God's Word can be transformational.

When we preachers call people to change, we are not asking them to align with our thinking but with God's. J. Kent Edwards states:

One of the most significant differences between a motivational speaker and a preacher is the source of the ideas they communicate. Motivational speakers

⁴² Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives*, 14.

⁴³ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1941), 35.

⁴⁴ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 241.

⁴⁵ William Barclay, *New Testament Words* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 185.

skillfully arrange their speaking and material around an idea of their own choosing. Preachers are different. As spokespeople for God, we arrange the content of our sermons around God's ideas. Motivational speakers sell their audiences their ideas. Preachers persuade people to adopt God's ideas.⁴⁶

When God's Word is the authority, then there is a power that enables a person to conform to God's image. When God's Word is our authority, we as preachers can call people to submission with confidence. As the culture drifts further and further from a biblical worldview, the church and biblical preaching are all the more essential. It is for this reason that Scott Gibson offers four suggestions for preachers. First, he recommends that "preachers need to reclaim the historic commitments of preaching an unmitigated adherence to the authority of the Bible,"⁴⁷ for, as Gibson goes on to state, "the Bible is all we have."⁴⁸ Therefore preachers must not compromise it or offer a different foundation on which people can build their lives. John Stott writes, "The reason why the church has historically submitted to Scripture and why evangelicals continue to do so is that our Lord Jesus himself did. Thus the authority of Christ and the authority of Scripture belong together. The church has no liberty to repudiate what her Lord has affirmed."⁴⁹

A second exhortation is the need to cultivate theological discernment. Gibson warns of a pragmatism that has crept into the evangelical church that causes preachers to say, "If

⁴⁶ Edwards, *Deep Preaching*, 67.

⁴⁷ Scott M. Gibson, "Biblical Preaching in an Anti-Authority Age," *Preaching to a Shifting Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 224.

⁴⁸ Gibson, *Preaching to a Shifting Culture*, 224.

⁴⁹ John R. W. Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity, and Faithfulness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 58.

it works, don't fix it." The passion to reach souls can cause preachers to neglect thoughtful discussions or fail to ask needed questions.⁵⁰

Third, Gibson encourages preachers to understand their culture. When preachers blend good theological understanding with appropriate cultural analysis, they become skilled missionaries who can experience transformational results.⁵¹

Finally, Gibson suggests that preachers need to reclaim a biblically based theology of preaching.⁵² Part of this theology contains the conviction that preaching stands on the authority of God's Word. We as preachers need not back away from the Scriptures. Rather, Gibson exhorts, "we need to proclaim the powerful, authoritative Word in the midst of a culture that is looking for a voice in its wilderness."⁵³

Transformational Preaching and Connection to the Audience

There are a number of ways in which preachers can connect with their audiences. Connection is a subjective measure of the relationship that the preacher has with the people who are listening. Connection affects the passion to listen and the ability to sustain attention. Connection also touches the belief in the communicator and the credibility that listeners confer on the one who is preaching. Why is connection important? John Maxwell identifies a crucial reason: "The truth doesn't change lives until people are ready to accept the truth, and they are not willing to accept the truth until they've accepted you and me.

⁵⁰ Gibson, *Preaching to a Shifting Culture*, 225.

⁵¹ Gibson, *Preaching to a Shifting Culture*, 225.

⁵² Gibson, *Preaching to a Shifting Culture*, 226.

⁵³ Gibson, *Preaching to a Shifting Culture*, 226.

Once people buy into me and I have bought into them and who they are, then we can start making some movement and connecting.”⁵⁴

Many factors affect connection, but perhaps the most important one is the preacher’s interest in people. Maxwell writes,

Good teachers, leaders and speakers don’t see themselves as experts with passive audiences they need to impress; and they don’t view their interests as most important. Instead, they see themselves as guides and focus on helping others learn. Because they value others, they work at connecting with the people they are teaching or trying to help.⁵⁵

People must matter if the preacher is going to connect with them.

One of the failures of communicators that Maxwell identifies is focusing primarily on themselves and what they have to say. Of his early ministry and some of the mistakes he made Maxwell observes, “When I counseled people who were experiencing difficulties, my attitude was: ‘Hurry up and finish telling me your problem so I can give you my solution.’”⁵⁶

Early on, however, Maxwell discovered a secret that has helped to shape his teaching and preaching. At a conference, Zig Ziglar gave him a principle that forever changed the way he saw people and therefore changed the way he communicated: “If you will first help people get what they want they will help you get what you want.”⁵⁷ Maxwell comments, “Finally, I understood what had been missing from own communication—and from my interaction with other people. I saw how selfish and self-centered I’d been. I

⁵⁴ John Maxwell, *Communicating or Connecting, in Preaching* (July/August 2010), 6.

⁵⁵ John Maxwell, *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 11.

⁵⁶ Maxwell, *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect*, 12.

⁵⁷ Maxwell, *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect*, 12.

realized I was trying to get ahead by correcting others when I should have been trying to connect with others.”⁵⁸ He made a vow to study good communicators and “to connect with others by focusing on them and their needs instead of my own.”⁵⁹

One of the ways preachers express interest in people is through listening. It stands to reason that people will be interested in listening to a preacher if she has first listened to them. Timothy Keller thereby suggests that part of preaching preparation is the pastor’s integration of pastoral and preaching duties. Keller encourages pastors to spend time both in the study of the Word and in the practice of being with people: “The main way to become a good preacher is to preach a lot, and to spend tons of time in people work. That’s how you become something more than a Bible commentator; you become a flesh-and-blood preacher.”⁶⁰ Keller goes on to state: “It is only through doing people-work that you become the preacher you need to be—someone who knows sin, how the heart works, what people’s struggles are, and so on. Pastoral care and leadership is to some degree sermon prep. More accurately, it is preparing the preacher, not just the sermon.”⁶¹

Stowell also recognizes the importance of connection when he encourages preachers to give attention to the relevance of their preaching so that it will connect with the audience. In talking about relevance and its importance to preaching, he encourages preachers to ask, “Did I create a medium whereby God could connect with the real-life

⁵⁸ Maxwell, *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect*, 12.

⁵⁹ Maxwell, *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect*, 12.

⁶⁰ Timothy Keller, “Timothy Keller on How He Prepares Sermons,” *Preaching Today*, (November 2009), <http://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/2009/november/timkelleronhowhepreparessermons.html>.

⁶¹ Timothy Keller, comment on “Ten Questions For Expositors,” Ten Questions for Expositors - Keller, comment posted April 4, 2007, <http://unashamedworkman.wordpress.com/2007/04/04/ten-questions-for-expositors/> (accessed November 20, 2010).

situations of the listeners?”⁶² Stowell suggests five ways that preachers can strengthen their ability to connect with their audience, thereby strengthening the effect of their message. First, he suggests the preacher maintain a relevant life. Relevance in Stowell’s understanding is a life that supports the message. The listener needs to see the pastor growing and making progress in the areas about which she preaches. Second, he encourages the centrality of God’s Word. The preacher must be clear about what the text is saying and communicating the truth of the text. The power of connection and transformation is connecting people to the work of the Holy Spirit. Third, the preacher has to be concerned with the relevance of context. If the preacher does not understand the situations that the audience faces, the sermon might be crafted for the wrong people. The fourth assumption is the importance of clarity. Being lucid should always be a high priority for all who speak. Stowell’s final suggestion for improving connection is what he calls “crossroads.” Here he is speaking about the verdict of the sermon. The preacher needs to present listeners with a decision they need to make. The connection becomes personal at this point because the Word of God is being connected to each listener—asking what he or she will do with the truth just heard.⁶³

In Don Smith’s book *Creating Understanding*, he suggests that communication means speakers are trying to establish a commonness with someone.⁶⁴ To accomplish this connection, he encourages teachers to know their audience. In knowing that audience,

⁶² Keller, “Ten Questions for Expositors,” 2009.

⁶³ Keller, “Ten Questions for Expositors,” 2009.

⁶⁴ Donald K. Smith, *Creating Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 27.

Smith states, we teachers and preachers must learn their needs, interests, and ways of expressing their concerns. It is necessary, Smith continues, to be involved with those to whom we communicate so we can learn their language and have shared experiences. As we participate in their culture, we learn appropriate metaphors, common language expressions, and ways of looking at life. As we spend time bonding with our constituents, we discover their beliefs and learn how to connect the eternal Word of God with a specific people group. Smith's original audience was missionaries who would be working in cross-cultural contexts, but his words are equally needed for those who remain in their place of birth.

In addition to practicing good pastoral care, clear application is an important step in connecting the Scriptures to the audience. There is a need to make personal application if the preacher is going to connect with the audience. Many preachers are adapting some form of sermonic outline in which the preaching points are all applicational. But even for those preachers who retain the historical practice of propositional statements, application is gaining great attention. Truth without application is inadequate, suggests Packer:

"Preaching is essentially teaching plus application . . . where the plus is lacking something less than preaching takes place."⁶⁵ A study of a broad range of preachers will find consensus about the importance of application. John A. Broadus suggests, "The application in a sermon is not merely an appendage to the discussion or a subordinate part of it, but is the main thing."⁶⁶ A. W. Tozer forcefully makes the point:

⁶⁵ Packer, et. al., *Preaching the Living Word: Addresses from the Evangelical Ministry Assembly*, 31.

⁶⁶ John A. Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 4th ed., Rev. Vernon L. Stanfield (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1979), 165.

Bible teaching without moral application could be worse than no teaching at all and could result in positive injury to the hearers. What is generally overlooked is that truth as set forth in the Christian Scriptures is a moral thing; it is not addressed to the intellect only, but to the will also. It addresses itself to the total man, and its obligations cannot be discharged by grasping it mentally. Truth engages the citadel of the human heart and it is not satisfied until it has conquered everything there.⁶⁷

In his book, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, Bryan Chapell states, "Preaching without application may serve the mind, but preaching with application requires service to Christ. Application makes Jesus the center of a sermon's exhortation as well as the focus of its explanation."⁶⁸

But application, like preaching with purpose, is hard work. Haddon Robinson contends that the greatest share of heresy in sermons today resides not in the presentation of the Scripture's meaning but rather in the sermon's application of the preaching points.

Preachers want to be faithful to the Scriptures and going through seminary, they have learned exegesis. But they may not have learned how to make the journey from the biblical text to the modern world. . . . Sometimes we apply the text in ways that might make the biblical writer say, "Wait a minute, that's a wrong use of what I said." This is the heresy of a good truth applied in a wrong way.⁶⁹

So, how do preachers practice good application and avoid heresy? Robinson offers some helpful categories of application that should be noted as one prepares and preaches.⁷⁰

Application that is certain. Some applications need not be discussed but only declared. When the text gives an application along with the principle, the preacher can exhort both with all the authority of God. For instance, when Paul exhorts the church to

⁶⁷ A. W. Tozer, *The Best of A. W. Tozer*, comp. Warren W. Wiersbe (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1978), 140-41.

⁶⁸ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 45.

⁶⁹ Haddon Robinson, "The Heresy of Application," *Leadership Journal* 18, no. 4 (Fall 1997), 21.

⁷⁰ Haddon Robinson, *The Art of the Sermon*, quoted in Fabarez, *Preaching That Changes Lives*, 138.

maintain unity,⁷¹ the practice of being gentle and patient with each other is specified in the text. When one preaches on this text, the application of being gentle and showing patience is as certain as the principle of protecting the unity of the church and can be preached with the same authority.

Application that is probable. In preaching on unity in the church, Paul instructs believers to use their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the church. A further application might be made that each person needs to identify his or her spiritual gifts. If one does not know one's spiritual gifts, it is hard to use them. The preacher might cite other passages that help to identify various spiritual gifts and might even suggest some ways that one can identify which gifts God has given. The preacher might say, "It makes sense, then, that each of us will aid the church when we know what our spiritual gifts are and use them humbly for the greater good. Therefore, as soon as you can, work with a spiritually mature Christian to discover how God has gifted you."

Application that is possible. In an attempt to broaden the application, a preacher might suggest, when preaching on the call to protect the unity of the church, that he is going to encourage a few members to join a different Sunday school class for the next four weeks. He is giving a specific application that is not mandated in the text but is a possibility. The preacher might state, "What is the benefit of joining a new Sunday school class for a few weeks? When we get out of our defined groups and get to know different

⁷¹ Ephesians 4:1-4.

people in our church, the bond of fellowship is strengthened.” The tone of this delivery will be less forceful than the tone the preacher uses when an application is certain.

Application that is improbable but possibly helpful. In preaching about the church and unity, the pastor may suggest that every member intentionally do something every week to build the unity of the body. This kind of goal might be helpful for certain people, but it is important that the preacher be clear this is only a suggestion. The clarity and specificity of this kind of application give a goal to reach, but the audience needs to understand the application does not come with the force of “thus saith the Lord.”

Application helps to make the sermon effective because it connects the truth of God’s Word with the realities of a person’s life. When one considers specific applications of God’s Word, Stephen Olford’s suggestions are helpful for any preacher.⁷² Application must be personal, or audience members will feel as though they are sitting in on someone else’s message. Second, when one applies the text, Olford suggests using the second person pronoun so the audience knows the preacher is speaking to them. Third, application must also be practical. A lack of clarity in application will neutralize the preacher’s desire to see change occur. When we preachers call people to be saved, Olford tells us to make sure we tell people how to be saved. Fourth, application should be purposeful. Having our course set on Christ will help us as preachers to remain directed in our application. The purpose of preaching the Word is to bring people into conformity with Christ.

⁷² Stephen F. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 255.

Transformational preaching is not easy work. It requires the work of Christ being experienced in the preacher's life. It demands that preachers live with an expectant heart to see God work in those to whom they preach. James tells believers to "be doers of the word and not hearers only."⁷³ To engage people with God's Word is what he intended. When people are engaged with God's Word, both preachers and audiences will be more than informed; they will be transformed. Such is the ultimate task of preaching for transformation, and this is the task addressed in the fourth chapter.

⁷³ James 1:22.

CHAPTER 4: LECTURE NOTES FOR A SEMINAR ON HOW TO PREACH TRANSFORMATIONAL SERMONS

The Purpose of the Seminar

There is a growing body of research which indicates that morally it is hard to distinguish people of faith, who listen to sermons on a regular basis, from people who seldom listen to the preaching of God's Word. Added to this problem is the frustration pastors feel over the lack of personal change in their congregation members.¹ The reality of what polls are revealing and preachers are experiencing does not seem to match with God's desire for people who have received salvation and the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is God's intention to see his followers transformed into the image of His Son. This current situation has raised many questions about the church and in particular about the effectiveness of preaching. One of the methods God has chosen to use in the growth of people is the preaching of His Word.² The challenge that uniquely faces the communicator of God's Word is, what kind of preaching helps people become more like Christ. The purpose of these lectures is to instruct preachers on how to communicate transformational sermons which will result in spiritual growth. These lectures will help Christian communicators understand how their preaching can align with God's vision to see people conformed to the image of His Son.

¹ The first chapter of this thesis-project sites research supporting these claims.

² The second chapter of this thesis-project contains a detailed description of many biblical passages that address this issue.

The Goal of the Seminar

The goal of the seminar is to equip preachers of God's Word to be able to move their sermons from just the communication of truth to communicating for personal transformation. By the end of the lectures the participants will be able to articulate their purpose for preaching, identify what transformation looks like in their own lives and will learn skills on how to preach transformational sermons.

An Overview of the Seminar

To facilitate the practice of preaching for spiritual transformation the following four lectures can be presented in one or more sessions. It is best done in two ninety-minute sessions. The lectures can be presented by themselves or the presenter can add discussion questions or assignments that they perceive helpful to their given situation. At the end of each lecture are some example discussion questions as well as an assignment that can be given to the participants. While it is preferable to keep the size of the class to less than thirty people for discussion purposes, it is not essential to limit the class. The first lecture addresses the convictions that a transformational preacher must have. The second lecture presents the encouragement and practice of transformation that needs to be occurring in a person who wants to preach transformational sermons. The third lecture explores the connection between revealing the glory of God and transformation. The fourth lesson presents five ways to deliver transformation into the lives of those to whom we preach.

Lecture 1: Transformational Preaching Begins with Theological Convictions

Objectives

By the end of this lecture, learners will:

1. be able to articulate the theological convictions of a transformational preacher;
2. be asked to evaluate their current convictions on preaching and transformation against those proposed in this lesson; and
3. articulate their own set of convictions for preaching.

Key Concept: People need to grow, and by the power of God they can; therefore, our preaching should set as its target personal transformation.

When preachers stand in the pulpit, they do so not in a vacuum of belief but with a number of convictions about people, themselves, and the Bible. What convictions need to be in place for the person who wants to be a transformational preacher?

We Need to be Transformed

The Bible tells us that God alone knows the hearts of all people,³ and his analysis of our hearts is summarized in Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” Our hearts, our minds, and our bodies are all tainted by sin. The ultimate consequences of sin entering this world are our spiritual death and relational separation from God. When Jesus came to this earth, he stated that his mission was “to seek and to save that which is lost.”⁴ His mission tells us that we need to be changed. We are lost, and Jesus came to find us, so that he could save us. The

³ 1 Kings 8:39.

⁴ Luke 19:10.

transformational preacher is convinced that apart from the gospel the destination of people is hell. The preacher is also convinced that people who are saved by Christ are called to be transformed which touches every aspect of their lives.⁵

We can be Transformed in Christ

The apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come."⁶ The heart of the Christian faith revolves around change. However, this change is not realized by our strength but in God. The Holy Spirit has the power to transform lives. The One who brings salvation does not stop at changing our eternal destiny. He changes our lives here on earth. In John 16:8-11, Jesus described one of the roles of the Holy Spirit in salvation: "And when the Counselor comes, he will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment; of sin, because they do not believe in me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." Millard Erickson concludes, "Regeneration is a supernatural occurrence, and the Holy Spirit is the agent who produces it. The flesh (i.e., human effort) is not capable of effecting this transformation."⁷ The Spirit empowers the Word of God and brings about the transformation. The preacher has the privilege of presenting the Word but does so with the conviction that the results are ultimately in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

⁵ The second chapter of this thesis-project contains Biblical research identifying the results of sin's devastating effects on the human race.

⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:17.

⁷ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 873.

Transformational preachers work in cooperation with the sovereign grace of God. It is the theological concept of prevenient grace—God is acting before us. God’s grace is prevenient in our lives when it stirs within us a desire for the Word. God’s grace is prevenient when it changes our perspective on the Word of God.⁸ The Holy Spirit enables our understanding of the Word and then prompts a desire to respond to the Word of God. When preachers step into the pulpit, God has gone before them and goes with them.⁹

Transformation can be a Joy with the Right Motives

There are many reasons to change, but not all of them will be a joy to the heart. Some people change to prove their worth to God. Others believe that if they change, then God will love them. They are forever trying to earn the Father’s affection and approval. Transformation then has a level of fear attached to it because God’s love is conditional based upon people getting it right.

Others change to prove their value and worth to people. They live in fear of what others think or are driven to impress people. This passion to change carries along with it a practice of secrecy and hiding. Some come to church not with a commitment to honesty and transparency but as posers seeking to convince people they are something other than who they truly are.

A third motive for change is that people are driven to prove something to themselves. Ridden by guilt and defined by shame, people might be motivated to change how they see themselves.

⁸ 1 Thessalonians 12:13.

⁹ The second chapter of this thesis-project gives helpful definitions of transformation and identifies both our involvement as well as the Work of God. In particular note pages 22-28.

What each of these motivations has in common is to see transformation for personal gain. In addition, I would label each of these under the rubric called religion. These people are not motivated by the gospel. Fear marks their relationship, and therefore hiding is their practice. Transformation is a love-hate relationship. If a person is changing, then she loves it and feels proud. If a person is not changing, he hates it and curses God and others for not helping him.

A fourth motive is the desire to change not so God will love us humans but because he loves us. This is the message of the gospel. The passion comes not because of what we get but because of what we have been given. In other words, our transformation is not to get the love of God, but because he has loved us. Transformation is in light of his mercy, not to earn his mercy.¹⁰ When change is presented in this context, it becomes a delight. It does not feed a twisted thinking of becoming something to impress people, but rather it aligns our transformation to God's vision that we would become like Christ.

Transformational Preaching Aligns with God's Vision

If we as preachers believe that people need to change and that because the power of God they can change, then our preaching should set a target toward change. The old adage, "If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time," is sound advice for preaching. Our goal as preachers is not just to tell the listeners what the text says. Our job is not done until we help them answer the question, "What does this truth look like when I believe it, practice it, and fully embrace it in my life?" Our purpose is not just to get people into the Word; it is to

¹⁰ Romans 12:1.

get the Word into the people. Let the Word work its way through their minds and penetrate their hearts.

What is the target for the Christian preacher? Ephesians 4:11-12 states that preachers, along with prophets, evangelists, and apostles, are “to equip the saints for a work of service leading to the building up of Christ’s body.” This obligation to equip the body is met, in part, during the preaching of the Word when the body gathers for worship. According to 1 Corinthians 14:3, the purposes of preaching are to οἰκοδομή, translated in the NIV as “strengthening.” “It is a Pauline metaphor meaning spiritual and moral growth among believers.”¹¹ Second, preaching is to παράκλησις, translated in the NIV as “encouragement,” meaning “a calling of someone alongside to help.”¹² Finally, preaching is to παραμυθία, translated in the NIV as “comfort.” The idea is to “express love, concern, and comfort to someone in time of need.”¹³ These three words are summarized in 1 Corinthians 14:4 as edification. Preaching edifies the individual, and it edifies the body. According to Zodhiates, the term means to make a person fully ready or complete.¹⁴ The purpose then for the transformational preacher is not to inform persons of the truth but to effect a change in them. The preacher is preparing soldiers for the battle. This preparation touches their character, their gifting, and their thinking. They are being transformed from unskilled workers who would run from a battle to seasoned craftsmen with tools forged of

¹¹ A. C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 304.

¹² Walter A. Elwell and Philip W. Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), 453.

¹³ D. N. Freedman, A. C. Myers, and A. B. Beck, *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 276.

¹⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, electronic ed. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000), S. G2677.

steel. The aim of preaching is to equip every believer to fulfill what God has called him or her to do.¹⁵

Transformation is a Process, not Instantaneous

Change can occur when a person adjusts his or her thinking on a given point, whereas transformation speaks to something more profound and addresses a person's value system and attitudes.¹⁶ The word Paul used in Romans 12:2 is μεταμορφώθην, translated in the NIV as "transformed." According to Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, the passive verb means to change inwardly in fundamental character or condition.¹⁷ Therefore, transformation is not just a change of mind but a metamorphosis that requires a power from outside of people to achieve the desired transformation. Burns suggests we are looking for transformation in our leading and preaching, not just change.

We must distinguish here between the verbs "change" and "transform," using exacting definitions. To change is to substitute one thing for another. . . . But to transform something cuts much more profoundly. It is to cause a metamorphosis in form or structure, a change in the very condition or nature of a thing, a change into another substance, a radical change in outward form or inner character. . . . It is change of this breadth and depth that is fostered by transforming leadership.¹⁸

The implications are significant. Transformational preaching will seek to touch values and attitudes versus just informing the mind. Transformational preachers will develop a longer-range view versus seeking overnight change. It means we preachers will repeat themes

¹⁵ Further support for these ideas can be found in chapter two of this thesis-project under the title, *The Power of God's Word to Bring Transformation*.

¹⁶ Further development on the differences between change and transformation can be found in this thesis-project in chapter 3 under the heading, *Transformation versus Change*.

¹⁷ W. Arndt, F. W. Danker and W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 639.

¹⁸ James McGregor Burn, *Leadership* (London: Harper Torchbooks, 1978), 14.

because we do not expect people to learn how to love the unlovely with one sermon.

Transformation is hard work, and it takes time.

Transformational Preaching is Done out of Obedience

One last conviction must be held for transformational preachers. It answers the question, “In a day of multimedia and short attention spans, has preaching run its course?”

The answer is no. The reason is because God has commanded that his Word be preached.

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.¹⁹

Preach, because we have been commanded. Preach today, because tomorrow people may not want to listen.²⁰

Discussion Questions

1. What convictions are you aware of that affect your weekly teaching/preaching?
2. Identify from what we have just studied which of the six convictions you have allowed to influence your preaching. How has the conviction affected your preaching? Have people meet in small groups to discuss the questions. After the groups meet, come back together and discuss the responses.

Assignment

1. Develop your personal list of convictions for your preaching ministry.

¹⁹ 2 Timothy 4:1-2.

²⁰ A detailed biblical support for the basis of preaching can be found in chapter two of this thesis-project under the heading, *Preaching and Transformation*.

Lecture 2: Transformational Preaching Comes from Preachers Who Are Being Transformed

Objectives

By the end of this session, learners will

1. consider the importance of pursuing lifelong transformation as a prerequisite of being a transformational preacher;
2. be able to identify marks of personal transformation;
3. craft their strategy for implementing a pursuit of transformation.

Key Concept: To preach transformational sermons, the preacher must be experiencing transformation.

As preachers, we constantly look for ways to initiate transformation in the lives of those we lead. But what of the change that needs to be occurring in our own lives? Even with a solid theological basis for stating how God transforms a life through redemption, the experience of transformation may elude us as preachers. The purpose in this lecture is to help preachers understand the necessity of being in the process of change in their own lives.²¹

Growth in the Christian life is not about attaining a certain level. It is about helping the Christian who has been made a new creation through the work of Christ develop the character and image of Christ.²² Our ongoing transformation is realized when we partner with what God has done and is doing to help us attain his vision: conformity to

²¹The third chapter of this thesis-project provides support for the importance of preachers experiencing transformation. It begins under the heading, *Transformed Preachers: Experiencing Transformation*.

²²Romans 8:29, Galatians 4.

the image of Christ.²³ Transformation is less about particular steps we take and more about a journey we travel. But every journey has signposts letting us know that we are traveling in the right direction. As we study Romans 12:1-21, our goal is not to develop a list of items defining transformation that each preacher must check off, but to encourage a practice of submission to Christ and an engagement with his Word and his church that will lead to the changes Christ envisions for us.

In Romans 12, the apostle Paul unveils the process for transformation.²⁴ As stated earlier, the motivation for transformation is not to be accepted by God or by people, but rather because we are accepted and loved by the Father. The process of transformation is an expression of our worship and response to the mercy and grace of God. A study of Romans 12 gives the preacher six practices to daily invite the living God to transform our lives.²⁵

Present your Bodies to Christ as a Living Sacrifice

The first verse of Romans 12 tells us to be “a living sacrifice.” Paul exhorts us to daily present our bodies to Christ. Our surrender is not done once, but is a life of continual sacrifice. Carson states: “Paul encourages us to look at our entire Christian lives as acts of worship. It is not just what is done on Sunday in a church building that ‘ascribes worth’ to God, but what God and the world see in us every day and every moment of the week.”²⁶

²³ Romans 8:29, Philippians 2:12.

²⁴ In chapter 2 of this thesis-project you will find biblical exegesis of Romans chapter 12 with a focus on verse 2 and the concept of transformation. In addition note the exegesis on 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18.

²⁵ Philip Nation, “Eight Preachable Marks of a Transformed Life,” <http://www.sermoncentral.com/articlec.asp?article=Philip-Nation-8-Preachable-Marks-Transformed-Life>, (accessed September 10, 2010). The outline for this chapter was inspired in part by this article.

²⁶ D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary: Twenty-first Century Edition*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Romans 12:1-2.

The command is to lay down our lives to Christ. We are his servants; we are his spokespeople.

When thinking about adding a Saturday service I was struck by how invasive the ministry would be in my life. My struggle for months was, “Do I want to give up this much of my time?” Then one day the Lord asked me to change the question to, “God, do you want to use my time in a different way?” He was asking for surrender. The call to live a life of worship as a living sacrifice is where much of our transformation begins. As the leader, be the first to model a life of worship. Before you are a preacher, you are a worshiper of God. Before you are a leader, you are a submitted disciple. Transformation begins when we surrender our bodies to the master craftsman who shapes us, speaks to us, and forms his heart in us. A transformed life is marked by a willing surrender.

Commit to the Renewal of your Thinking.

How a person thinks shapes how a person acts. Paul is telling us in Romans 12:2 that your mind matters. The mind that you have been given is a great resource if it reflects the mind of Christ. However, all of us have been significantly influenced by the patterns of this world. Therefore, the practice of transformation requires an intentional restructuring of our minds. For believers to live out the change brought about by redemption, a spiritual mind is required. How do we gain this renewed mind?

The believer cannot be transformed without the truth. Time in God’s Word is a necessity. The preacher cannot cheat on this practice and expect to have a mind that reflects Christ. Many avenues for taking in the Word—Bible reading, Bible study, and Scripture memorization— exist. When preachers pore over the Scriptures to teach, unquestionably

their hearts will be stirred even though they are preparing the message for their people. But the demands on your time and the pressure on your character indicate that preachers of God's Word need more for their soul than the preparation to preach. Therefore, a distinction between sermon preparation and heart preparation is needed.

Sermon preparation is hard work. The preacher is always thinking about exegeting the text and exegeting the audience. Therefore, there needs to be time every day when the audience is removed and the text and the preacher have a direct conversation. The rapid reading of the Bible was the practice of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and John Stott all of their lives. Every year these preachers of God's Word read through the Bible in its entirety. After years of Christian experience, George Muller confessed, "I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, . . . but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner life might be nourished."²⁷ The steady intake of God's Word and the memorization of key texts help to shape preachers' minds and transform their hearts.

Live with a Right View of your Gifting

In Romans 12:3, Paul considers how our sacrifice will be lived out in the specific use of our spiritual gifts. Sober judgment is one of the signposts we should look for along our journey of transformation. Sobriety is searching for balance. The apostle warns us to not think too highly of ourselves, nor to think we have nothing to offer. Our calling to preach does not put us above others; it puts us among them. Romans 12:5 tells us that we

²⁷ George Muller, *Soul Nourishment First* (Bristol, England: Muller Homes for Children, n.d.), 1.

belong to the church as much as the church belongs to us. A preacher's gifts or his position should never be allowed to place him above others. There is a deep appreciation for the entire body that should be demonstrated by those who teach. There is an understanding that without the other gifts in the body the church will be sick.

Utilizing your gift with thankful humility recognizes that God is the one who gifted you and that you are part of a body working together, not the center that holds it all together. Faithfully using your gift in submission to God recognizes that he has called you to preach and has called you to do it as well as you can. To think we are the center of the church or to think that our gift does not matter are both conclusions the preacher wants to avoid. A transformed life is marked by humble use of your gift of preaching.

Live a Life of Love

The bulk of Romans 12 deals with how believers relate to one another. From verses 13-20, a model is given to us for remaining close to one another. The language of the passage points to the needs we have: sharing, hospitality, blessing, weeping, peace, hunger, thirst. Meeting these needs for one another is a first step to living a life of love. William Willimon suggests that most transformation may not occur during the worship service but while we rub shoulders with people:

Transformation happens best in the long term engagement with the Christian community. We must live out the truth of God's word on the street in relationship with people or it never really touches our hearts and changes the very fabric of our character. I believe most significant transformation is not the bolt of lightning, but rather the formation that is wrought by the church in the daily little things we do.²⁸

²⁸ William H. Willimon, "The Art of Transformational Preaching" (sermon, Festival of Homiletics, Nashville, TN, May 21-25, 2007), <http://homiletics.impactlearning.org/store/seminar/seminar.php?seminar=5385> (accessed November 15, 2010).

You may attend a church named Community Fellowship but be completely alone. If you are going to be in community, the walls of protection must come down and the habit of vulnerability must be practiced. It is risky to have other people know you well, but it is death if no one knows you. When you are known, there is accountability. When there is accountability, there is the potential for growth. This does not need to happen with the whole congregation, but it must happen with someone.

A second choice you can make is the practice of knowing others. Paul exhorts us to mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who rejoice. In order to weep with someone, you have to be more than physically near them. You have to love them. But when you get that close to people, you also experience the downside of community. There will be those who oppose you (Rom 12:14). As a leader of believers, you have a unique opportunity to bring together those who are individually being transformed by the gospel, so they may share their lives together. That very process is transforming. Though people show an inherent desire to be in community, they will often substitute proximity for relationships. We must pursue the transformation experienced in community in order to take on the heart of Christ, who wept at the tomb of a friend. Community is the place that catalyzes change.

One way this practice of transformation can occur is to see your home as an extension of your ministry. Paul exhorts us to practice hospitality. Something wonderful happens when we engage in the biblical act of fellowship. As we gather in Christ's name, we experience a deeper understanding of his power and his love. We not only understand it

in our heads but also grasp it with our hearts. Paul, writing to the Ephesian believers, says, “I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.”²⁹ As we deal honestly with one another’s lives, the character of Christ will force the choice between love of others and self-preservation. Loving those whom the preacher serves through placing their needs ahead of his own and practicing hospitality are marks of genuine love and the place of transforming grace.

Commit to a Life of Faith

Romans 2:12 says, “Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer.” These three statements are the evidence of faith that is working in your life. Transformation requires faith. We believe that, through faith in the provision of Christ’s death and resurrection a person is saved. But faith in Christ is not just how we are saved, it is how we live.³⁰ It is through the lens of faith that believers should see the work of God in their lives. It is through the life of faith that we see beyond our present circumstances. It is through the life of faith that we can endure our present struggles believing that God is doing good things in us. Faith is how we face the issues of life. How does a person access this kind of faith and live out this hope-filled and patient response? Paul tells us it is in the practice of faithful prayer.

Engaging in regular times of prayer both for your sermon and your congregation is perhaps one of the most challenging but needed spiritual disciplines. Prayer is an expression

²⁹ Ephesians 3:17b-18.

³⁰ Hebrews 11:6.

of faith and is the lifeblood of the preacher. People of faith are given the rare privilege of talking to God. In prayer we gain perspective on both our calling and God's power. In prayer we are reminded that apart from God we can do nothing. But in prayer we are empowered by the fact that with God all things are possible. A life being transformed is marked by faith lived out in the practice of prayer.

Fight for a Holy Life

The final verse of Romans 12 reads, "Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good" (v. 21). Satan is going to be there every day seeking to set a trap for the preacher. He knows that if he can take down the one who preaches God's Word he can render a lethal blow to the body of Christ. It is for this reason we must commit to the fight for a holy life.

For all the messages on grace we should preach, there need to be a few reminders that holiness matters. We are taught, "For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29). Our lives are to be lived above reproach. McCheyne reminds us, "A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hands of a holy God."³¹ No preacher is perfect, but our lives need to be experiencing transformation. We should always be able to say with Paul, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."³² These sign posts of transformation do well to serve as a goal for the one who preaches. When preachers can

³¹ Robert Murray McCheyne, *Sermons of Robert Murray McCheyne*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), back cover.

³² Philippians 3:12.

identify the specific ways in which God is transforming them, it becomes more natural that their preaching will help to bring about the same kind of transformation in their listeners.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you believe preachers must commit to being transformed?
2. How does your understanding of living in community affect your idea of transformation?
3. What ways have you found helpful to keep your heart alive to God? Have people meet in small groups to discuss the questions. After the groups meet, come back together and discuss the responses.

Assignment

1. Develop a month-long program that includes personal disciplines and community life for the purpose of nurturing your soul.
2. Write down three families or individuals you can invite to your home to get to know on a deeper level.

Lecture 3: Transformational Preaching Reveals the Glory of God

Objectives

By the end of this session, learners will:

1. consider the need for theocentric preaching;
2. be able to articulate the connection between the revealed God and transformation; and
3. understand how to reveal the glory of God in every sermon.

Key Concept: “People are starving for the greatness of God.”³³

Discussion

Break the group into smaller groups, and have the groups study Genesis 16:1-16 or Isaiah 6:1-13. The intent of this discussion time is to identify how God revealed himself to two individuals and the affect it had on both of them.

1. What did the person or people discover about God?
2. What did they discover about themselves?
3. What transformation occurred after the revelation of God?

After the small groups meet, come back together and discuss their responses to the questions. In this time it is not necessary to make any final conclusions, but help people notice the connection between the revelation of God’s glory and transformation of people.

The Relationship of the Glory of God to Transformation

When Moses came down the mountain after meeting God, he was a picture of what humanity should have been. Moses radiated God’s glory because he had gazed on God’s glory. When Hagar was facing insurmountable odds with her son, it was a revelation of God that encouraged her and gave her the strength to face challenges in her future. When people see the glory of God their lives are changed. But when the glory of God is not proclaimed our problems seem larger and our strength weaker. William Willimon states, “Small views of God are killing the church.”³⁴ In 2 Corinthians 3:17-4:18 there is a connection between the revelation of the glory of God and the transformation of the people

³³ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 9.

³⁴ Willimon, “The Art of Transformational Preaching,” (accessed November 15, 2010).

of God. One result of our salvation is revealed by Paul when he states, “Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”³⁵ Our salvation gives us the capacity to see. And what we see is what transforms us.³⁶

First, when a person comes to Christ there is freedom. What is our freedom from? It is tempting to bring Paul’s other writing to this text and suggest he is stating that we are free from the law. But in the context of the passage, the freedom Paul speaks of is the freedom from blindness. Garland writes:

The widespread idea that Paul has in mind freedom from the law should be dismissed. The immediate context should guide the decision; not an importing of theological issues from Paul’s other letters into 2 Corinthians. In the context freedom has to do with freedom from the veil that only comes when one turns to the Lord (3:16, 18). Because Israel did not have the Spirit to make their hearts receptive to God’s law, they were kept from beholding God’s glory. Using metonymy, Paul employs the term “the veil” to represent the people’s hardheartedness that thwarted their ability to experience God’s glory to its fullest extent.³⁷

When we turn to the Lord, Jesus sets us free through the Spirit. Instead of shrinking away from the power and the glory of God we receive hearts that delight in him and want to draw close to him.

Second, when a person comes to Christ she is given the ability to see the glory of Christ. The glory of God is the sum of all that he is: love, goodness, beauty, purity, judgment, splendor, power, wisdom, and majesty. Unbelievers are blind because the god of this age has covered their eyes and hearts. They cannot see that the glorious Christ is the

³⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:16.

³⁶ In chapter 2 of this thesis-project you will find biblical exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18.

³⁷ D. E. Garland, *2 Corinthians, The New American Commentary*, vol. 29 (Logos Library System; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 196-197, <http://www.logos.com/product/2028/the-new-american-commentary-2-corinthians> (accessed November 19, 2010).

image of God. It is different for people who have trusted Christ as their Savior. What exactly do we see? Garland states:

To see by means of a mirror does not mean we see only “indistinctly” or “in a distorted way,” but indirectly as over against our eschatologically seeing him “face to face.” In this mirror we see an image, a reflection of the glory of God, which is as close as human beings can ever get to this ultimate reality. As such it is provisional. Direct vision of God is “not for this world” but awaits the end of the age. Christ, however, is the image of God (4:4; Rom 8:29; Col 1:15), and we have the privilege to see the glory of God in the face of Christ (4:6, cp. John 14:9). Therefore, Christ mirrors God for believers.³⁸

The capacity to see the glory of God enables us to display God’s glory. We become like Moses, our faces shining with the splendor of our God.

Third, when we gaze upon the glory of God “we . . . are being transformed into his likeness.”³⁹ Omanson and Ellington note, “The participle *beholding* is from a relatively rare verb whose meaning is not certain. It is understood by some interpreters to mean “beholding as in a mirror (so *AB* and Knox).”⁴⁰ The process of beholding the glory of God enables us to be transformed, thereby reflecting his grace, love, and purity with ever-increasing measure. The transformation Paul speaks of here is “from one degree of glory to another.”⁴¹ Omanson and Ellington state, “The sense is that Christians are being transformed into higher degrees of glory. Some translators may have to say something like ‘we are becoming brighter and brighter’ or “‘our glory is constantly becoming greater.’”⁴² Paul tells us that Christians can, like Moses, approach the glory of the Lord

³⁸ Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 199-200.

³⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:18.

⁴⁰ R. L. Omanson and J. Ellington, *A Handbook on Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians*, UBS handbook series, *Helps for Translators* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 69.

⁴¹ 2 Corinthians 3:18 English Standard Version.

⁴² Omanson and Ellington, *A Handbook on Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 70.

with unveiled faces and experience the same transformation. Therefore, preachers who desire to see transformation from one degree of glory to another should make sure their sermons reveal Gods unconditional love, goodness, beauty, purity, judgment, splendor, power, wisdom, and majesty.

*The Practice of Revealing the Glory of God*⁴³

Stress the uniqueness of God

In our pluralistic world, it would put people on edge if you said in your sermon, “Christianity is a superior religion.” But you can stress the uniqueness of God in contrast to all other gods. For example, when a catastrophic event such as a mass murder in a local business, people might come to your church asking, “What does your God have to offer us at a time like this?” You can preach, “God is acquainted with suffering. Injustice and death are not issues that have passed him by. Our God lost a child in an act of violent injustice. God suffered as you have suffered. He did not stop the murder because through it our lives would be changed by the grace of his Son.” What you are telling them is, “Other religions tell you many good things, but Christianity is the only one that tells you this: Our God is unique, and if you want to explore him more keep digging into his Word.”

Instead of defending God and why he did not act, you are helping people to see that God, who has known human pain, is present and available to them in their times of need. You are not denying their sorrow or asking them to “just get over it.” You are not trying to

⁴³The third chapter of this thesis-project contains helpful information identifying the connection of revealing the glory of God and transformation.

be superior; you are revealing the uniqueness of our God and his ability to get close to those who hurt because he has hurt.

Stress the exclusivism of Jesus

Brian Chapell states, “Proclaiming the message of eternal salvation in Christ alone unquestionably evidences undiluted arrogance, gross insensitivity, and religious bigotry—unless the message is true.”⁴⁴ It is Jesus who states, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me.”⁴⁵ The apostles who planted the early church confirmed the same message concerning Jesus: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”⁴⁶ In this pluralistic age, one might suggest a more compromising approach is warranted. Some might even appeal to the broader message of all people being made in God’s image and therefore loved by God. But Scripture does not give us this option. If salvation is found in no means other than the person of Jesus, then our preaching should always seek to reveal the exclusive claims of Jesus. It is through his life that our atonement is secured. Chapell goes on to state,

Ultimately we do not preach Christ simply because we think our religion is superior to others in logic, origin, or enjoyment. We may well believe all of these things, but others will think the same of their religion. We certainly should not think that our religion is better than others simply because it is *ours*, or because it leads to better behavior according to the customs and culture we prefer. Unless we perceive the necessity of Christ’s atoning sacrifice for sin, we will inevitably only counsel

⁴⁴ Brian Chapell, *Preaching to a Shifting Culture*, edited by Scott M. Gibson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 66.

⁴⁵ John 14:6.

⁴⁶ Acts 4:12.

persons to know God through the greater pursuit of good works that the Bible says are never sufficiently holy to save them (Isaiah 64:4; Luke 17:10).⁴⁷

It is possible to affirm everything about Christ that was just stated and do so with an angry or bigoted spirit. One way to prevent that is to present the extreme love of Christ. A journey through the Gospels will lead you to encounter after encounter of Jesus' love for people. He dignified people that others rejected;⁴⁸ he had conversations with people that his entire race shunned;⁴⁹ he defended a woman whose behavior would ensure her expulsion from most churches.⁵⁰ His love for people is unmatched in that a perfect God took on the sins of the world. John's Gospel summarizes well the love of Christ we should proclaim: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love."⁵¹ Jesus Christ is the revelation of God, and the revelation of God transforms people. In as many ways as you can, uphold the exclusive claims of Christ and the extreme love of Christ, for there is no other by which people will ever be saved.

Stress the sovereignty of God

Cotton Mather, a minister in New England in the seventeenth century, said, "The great design and intention of the office of a Christian preacher is to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men."⁵² His words align with those of the prophet Isaiah, who answers the question, "What does the preacher declare when he is speaking of God" by saying, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings,

⁴⁷ Chapell, *Preaching to a Shifting Culture*, 69.

⁴⁸ Mark 5:25-34.

⁴⁹ John 4:1-42.

⁵⁰ Mark 14:6-9.

⁵¹ John 13:1b.

⁵² Cotton Mather, quoted in Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 23.

who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’”⁵³

God is the king of the universe, and he does reign. The calling of the preacher is to demonstrate God’s sovereignty, to declare his power and to paint pictures of his grandeur. Augustine wrote *The City of God* in a time that would resemble New York after September 11, 2001. Rome had been plundered. It did not really fall, but it had been violated. All of Rome felt that if the barbarians could sack the city, then it was unsafe to live there. Augustine wanted to help people distinguish the difference between Rome and the city of God. They were seeking their security from the wrong place. And when you seek your security from a city and not God, then a dangerous city is to be left. While pagan Romans might run and hide, Christians should be different, Augustine felt. Because Christians are citizens of the city of God, there are no weapons or bombs that can threaten a Christian’s home. *City of God* was Augustine’s declaration that “our God reigns!” He wanted to display the sovereign reign of God, and his conviction was that if people see who God really is, then that knowledge will affect their behavior. It will transform their definition of security.

The transformational preacher is committed to displaying at all times the character of God, his holiness, his majesty, his power. It is not a power that overwhelms or coerces but draws and invites us to “humble ourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift us up in due time.”⁵⁴ Piper shares this conclusion with preachers who declare the

⁵³ Isaiah 52:7.

⁵⁴ 1 Peter 5:6.

sovereignty of God: “When God sends his emissaries to declare, ‘Your God reigns!’ his aim is not to constrain man’s submission by an act of raw authority; his aim is to ravish our affections with irresistible displays of glory.”⁵⁵

Preaching that seeks to reveal the glory of God gives preachers the right perspective. In addition, it provides the hope that our Lord is capable of seeing us through these days. It is preaching that keeps God’s story central and ours secondary. It is preaching that helps the wounded Christian see the mercy of God. It helps the lonely Christian see the unstoppable love of God. It helps the discouraged Christian see the justice of God. When such preaching is done over a long period of time, the result will be a congregation of servants who are equipped by grace to fulfill all that God has for them.

Discussion Questions

1. Think of specific people you consider to be Christ-like. What has happened in their lives to make them the people they are?
2. Describe a time when God did not change your difficult situation, but you discovered something great about God in the midst of it. Have people meet in small groups to discuss the questions. After the groups meet, come back together and discuss the responses.

Assignment

1. Go back and read through two or three of your last sermons, and identify where you revealed the glory of God or could have done so.

⁵⁵ Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 25.

2. Read one of the following Spurgeon sermons and identify the numerous ways he displays the glory of God in “Hagar at the Fountain” or “The Zeal of the Lord.”

<http://www.spurgeon.org/spsrmns.htm>.

Lecture 4: Transformational Preaching Targets the Whole Body

Objectives

By the end of this session, learners will understand:

1. the value of integrating pastoral care and preaching preparation;
2. how to preach to the whole body to see transformation occur; and
3. how to not just make the truth of God clear, but to make it real.

Key Concept: Transformational preaching seeks to connect to a people’s mind, heart and body.

Preach to the Ears

Before you expect people to listen to you, listen to them. The practice of listening to people will enable the preacher to see life from a different perspective. It will invite into the study a broader range of people who will help to ask different questions of the Biblical text. When the preacher spends time listening to others it is one of the best ways to get them to listen to the sermon.

Link Pastoral Care and Sermon Preparation⁵⁶

For centuries pastoral care and sermon preparation were done by one person. In recent years, as churches have grown larger, many have preaching pastors or teaching

⁵⁶ The third chapter of this thesis-project contains research identifying the need and skills for connecting with the audience.

pastors. It is not always stated but often practiced that the preaching pastor is free to study and has a primary task of preaching the weekend services. The danger of this model is that separation from people occurs. As Tim Keller (who pastors a very large New York church) stated: “The main way to become a good preacher is to preach a lot, and to spend tons of time in people work. That’s how you become something more than a Bible commentator; you become a flesh-and-blood preacher.”⁵⁷ Keller goes on: “It is only through doing people-work that you become the preacher you need to be—someone who knows sin, how the heart works, what people’s struggles are, and so on. Pastoral care and leadership is, to some degree, sermon preparation. More accurately, it is preparing the preacher, not just the sermon.”⁵⁸

The old preacher’s line says we need to remember we are preaching to sheep, not giraffes. If we preach to giraffes, we will put things at a level we or our preaching peers are comfortable with, instead of listening to our hearers and saying, “What are you capable of hearing? What are you facing? How is your life hurting today?” Listening to the hearers is best done when it is understood as an integrated approach to the shepherd’s duties. It is a mistake to pit pastoral care and leadership against preaching preparation. When you counsel, you get a first-hand look at how people process change. When you listen to people in your congregation, you will hear their struggles with sin and see the dangers of misplaced priorities. You will also see the dedication of husbands who have kept their vows

⁵⁷ Timothy Keller, “Timothy Keller on How He Prepares Sermons,” *Preaching Today*, November 2009.

⁵⁸ Timothy Keller, comment on “Ten Questions For Expositors,” Ten Questions for Expositors - Keller, comment posted April 4, 2007, <http://unashamedworkman.wordpress.com/2007/04/04/ten-questions-for-expositors/> (accessed November 20, 2010).

and children who have honored their parents. When you sit with people and hear their questions, they will move you beyond simple answers to sermons that connect to their complex worlds. Spending time with people is a great place to get new preaching ideas or ways of illustrating. Another way to listen is to create opportunities for feedback.

Create Opportunities for Feedback

Let your congregation help you to ask the right questions. This can be done in a variety of ways. Some preachers sit with a group of people each week after the sermon is written and allow the representative group to ask questions. These people help the pastor to see where the sermon is clear and where things get blurry. They help to move the sermon from talking about the Bible to talking to people. This process can also be done if you find a group of people who will talk about a sermon series you will be preaching. Give them some advance notice to read through the passages, and then let them come together and pose their questions.

When you preach on contemporary issues, it might be helpful to form an ad hoc group of specialists to help learn the personal dimensions of the problem. For example, when you preach on the sanctity of human life, it would be helpful to gather a doctor, a crisis pregnancy counselor, a woman who has had an abortion, and maybe even a young teenager who decided to give up her baby for adoption. If the preacher listens, this ad hoc group will keep the sermon from trite conclusions and thoughtless judgments. While remaining solidly biblical, the preacher is up to date and will communicate in a way that people will want to hear.

Visualize the audience in your sermon preparation. This idea first came to me in a preaching class with Dr. Haddon Robinson, and I have practiced it since I first heard it. Each week, invite six to seven people into your study with you. They are not there, but visualize their presence and let them represent their world, their questions, and their issues. It is helpful to have them be real people in your congregation with real needs. I purposely have a cross section of the congregation. In my current group, I have a dad who home schools his children and a mother whose children attend a public school. In the room are a single woman who wants to be married and a thirty-eight-year-old man who is married and does not want to be. I have a wealthy and admired woman and a man who lives every month paycheck to paycheck. I have a senior who travels quite a bit and a woman who has been living with cancer for two years. I change my group about every four months. It forces me to get to know others in my congregation and keeps the illustrations changing.

As I work through the sermon, I have a fictitious conversation with the people in my group. I ask how this sermon might touch their lives. What truth in this text is hard to believe, and how do they see this truth affecting their lives? I make sure my illustrations connect to the group. Some in the group like sports; others hate it because the football games take their husbands away from them. As I interact with my group, they help me keep the sermon connected to people. They help me to move the sermon from interesting facts from the Bible to truth that touches our lives. Often they keep me honest. The cynics in my group always ask me what difference this truth makes. The scholars in my group ask me where I got my information. My groups have done more for me than they will ever realize.

Thomas Long advocates this type of visualizing the listeners during sermon preparation. Listen to the following quote and identify the ways in which you see him visualizing the audience:

It is not enough, though, to go to the Bible only with our own lives in view. We must self-consciously embody the needs and situations of others, especially those who are different from ourselves. Some preachers find it helpful, as part of the process of interpreting the scripture to visualize the congregation that will be present when the sermon is preaching. They survey the congregation in their minds eye, seeing there the familiar faces and the lives behind them. They see the adults and the children, the families and those who are single, those who participate actively in the church's mission and those who stand cautiously on the edges of the church's life. They see those for whom life is full and good and those for whom life is composed of jagged pieces. They see the regulars sitting in their customary places and wondering if there is a place for them. They see the people who are there, and they see the people who cannot be there, or who choose not to be there. When preachers turn to the scripture, all these people go with them. Other preachers invite members of the congregation actually to participate with them in exploring the biblical text, gathering a small group early in the sermon development process to listen to the text, to study it together, to raise questions about it, and to name the concerns it evokes.⁵⁹

Whether you do this for the whole congregation, with a group of people physically sitting with you, or a group sitting invisibly with you, listen to the congregation's questions. Understand their hurt. Your preaching then will not skip over their lives but will be influenced by them and will communicate to where they live.

Preach to the Mind

When you aim for people's minds you are seeking to do more than just fill them with information--you are speaking to people's beliefs. During most sermons, people are expecting to learn information about the Bible. They are being told what to think instead of how to think biblically. Romans 12:2 tells us that our minds need to be renewed. Our

⁵⁹ Thomas Long, *The Witness of Preaching* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 56.

thinking needs to conform with the mind of Christ. Since our goal as preachers is life transformation, our purpose is first to help believers think differently. To accomplish this renewal of the mind, preachers need to bring the truth of God into direct interaction with the beliefs of the listeners.⁶⁰ In 2 Corinthians 4:2, the apostle Paul states that he was committed to engaging the Corinthian church with a clear presentation of the truth: “We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” In this divine-human interchange there are a two things that you want to see happen.

Let the Truth Challenge People’s Beliefs

How a person thinks determines what he does. If a person is contemplating divorce, he might say, “I will be better off if I leave this marriage.” What is the person’s belief? “I will hurt less by disobeying God than by staying married. I will be happier disobeying God than learning to love my wife.” It is a lie, but many people believe the lie. If a person is going to change and stay in the marriage, he needs more than the statement, “God does not want you to get a divorce.” He needs to have his belief’s identified and challenged. Preaching to the mind is about helping people encounter the truth in a way that it challenges their belief systems. Rather than just presenting the truth, the preacher engages the thinking and the beliefs of the listener. Titus 3:3 declares, “At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.” When you live

⁶⁰ The third chapter of this thesis-project contains research supporting the authority of God’s Word to challenge a person’s thinking. In addition Scott Gibson’s suggestions for preachers outlined in chapter three are helpful for connecting the truth of God’s Word to a person’s mind.

in sin, you are living in deception and believing a lie. Preaching to a person's mind helps to make the truth real by letting the Word of God engage his beliefs and values.

To help people get to their belief system, you have to get to their thinking patterns. You have to reason with the values that govern their behavior. You have to speak to their minds and help them understand what they are thinking and especially what lies they may be embracing. Then you help them change their belief system. Once the person's beliefs and values are exposed, then change can occur through repentance.

Help People Practice Repentance

When you hear the word “repentance,” what comes to mind? For many it is a harsh word that brings negative feelings. Help your congregation grow to love the concept of repentance. The word *μετάνοια* is a wonderful word—“covering several biblical ideas that range from regret to changing one's mind or behavior so as to bring about a moral or ethical conversion.”⁶¹ Biblical repentance is changing the way we think about something by accepting the way God thinks about it. When you present the truth and challenge a person's belief system, the next logical step is to bring her thinking into alignment with God's.

Transformational preaching is leading people to the practice of repentance. We present the Word of God, which is about changing people's minds at the deepest level—the level of belief and values. Because transformation happens only after we change

⁶¹ P. J. Achtemeier, Harper & Row, and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 861.

somebody's thinking, then our preaching should aim at helping to align a person's thinking with God's through the practice of repentance.

Preach to the Eyes

When you aim for the eyes, you are using a person's imagination to help them see the truth. One way to facilitate this connection is to help people see the truth and how it plays out in the world they live. A simple but profound question will help you explore this area: "What does this truth *look* like in life?" Help the listeners see the truth, and then they will more easily embrace it. Galli and Larson state, "We live in a visual, image-saturated culture. The more mental pictures we use, the more memorable, evocative, and understandable will be our sermons."⁶² Use mental pictures to help your listeners grasp the power of the truth. The key is to use an illustration that is specific and detailed.

Take, for example, the phrase from Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Peace is an abstract concept. When you tell people the peace of God is going to guard their hearts, they might ask, "How?" but they will also ask, "What does this look like?" One preacher stated:

Guarding peace looks like a single mother who has more month than money. The vows of her husband, "till death do us part," came up short, as did his monthly child support payments. On the surface she has no reason to live with peace when three kids bombard her every day with demands. But on one day as she read this passage she realized peace was an option. She had a choice to be ruled by the lack of money, to be overrun by her children, to be ruined by her disappointment, or to be ruled and guarded by the peace of Christ. What does peace look like? A single mom on the twenty-first of the month with little in the bank and less in the refrigerator

⁶² Mark Galli and Craig Brian Larson, *Preaching That Connects: Using Journalistic Techniques to Add Impact* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 65-66.

goes to bed, and rather than crying herself to sleep, she prays herself to sleep. Peace is a choice to not let your circumstances determine your demeanor, but letting Christ carry the weight on that day as she discovered she could to do every day.

Another example is a way to help people grasp materialism. To say that Americans are obsessed with materialism is true but vague. When a statement remains vague most people will conclude they don't have the problem. But if you say, "Americans are obsessed with the size of their wide-screen television, the location of their next exotic vacation, the toys on their new car, and the power of their new phone," you have gone from being vague to being visually specific. Galli and Larson write:

Being specific means saying Luger, rather than weapon; '89 Taurus, rather than vehicle; adultery, rather than sin; the nails through Christ's palms, rather than Christ's sufferings; Bob, the 45-year-old, overweight Chicago detective with the scar on the back of his hand, rather than the officer. The gunpowder is in specifics, the more precise the better.⁶³

Help people to see the truth with vivid pictures and specific details. When people can see the concept in flesh and blood, they have an easier time seeing how it might look in their life.

Preach to the Heart

Achtemeier states, "The heart is the center of emotions, feelings, moods, and passions."⁶⁴ The closest single word for "heart" in English is "motive." Jonathan Edwards speaks about our heart and classifies it as our affections. It is the inclination of the soul. The heart speaks to the very reason why we do things. The heart deals with how we feel about

⁶³ Galli and Larson, *Preaching That Connects*, 72.

⁶⁴ Achtemeier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 377.

something and the motivation that governs our actions. From the heart springs forth life and it is the heart that must be touched if we are to see growth.

There is a kind of preaching that urges people to moral behavior without understanding the importance of the heart. We, as preachers, often try to get people to act because of reasoned obligation. When we preach to the heart, we try to connect to the emotions of the person. We are not seeking to be manipulative, but we realize that without touching a person's motivations seldom do we see lasting change.

When Jesus was trying to motivate his disciples to pray for more people to join in the task of sharing the gospel, he did not simply tell them to pray for workers. He reflected to his first century audience that people . . . “were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”⁶⁵ His disciples knew what happens when sheep do not have shepherds. They die because of starvation or the attack of predators. The image moved the disciples to pray because they were motivated by what they knew could happen to people who did not know Christ. Jesus did more than request their prayers, he spoke to their hearts.

Some preachers might state, “Don’t lie. Tell the truth, because Jesus is truth.” That appeal stops at exhorting external behavior but does not touch what motivates the person. A person could preach,

Let me tell you why some of us might struggle with being truthful. When we analyze our lies we discover that behind the lie is the desire to avoid others’ disapproval. We cannot stand the idea that a person might think poorly of us. We fear someone’s judgment. If we just try to stop lying, it won’t work for long because we have not addressed what motivates our lying. We allow other people to determine our behavior and establish our values instead of Jesus. If you want to

⁶⁵ Matthew 9:35-38.

stop lying, you have to find what is motivating your sin—like my tendency to look to others for affirmation—and replace it with the security you can find in Jesus.

What you are seeking to do here is to find out what motivates people and help them discover not just the truth but the motivation to obey the truth.

*Preach to the Feet*⁶⁶

“Without an appeal for response, expository preaching lacks distinctive theological purpose and may function merely as a form of public address.”⁶⁷ Therefore, the transformational preacher will aim for the feet by giving people something to do when they leave the service. Most applications tell people what to do but do not show them how, when, and where to do it. Olford’s helpful outline will guide us in making our applications clear and personal.⁶⁸

Make Your Application Personal⁶⁹

You cannot speak in vague generalities, but you must make your application personal. One easy step is to change the use of the pronouns from “we” to “you.” The preacher speaks to people on behalf of God. He tells them that their behavior needs to change. He tells them they must align their hearts to God’s heart, and that is going to get personal and will need specific action. A preacher might say, “We’ve seen the biblical principle; we’ve seen two or three ways others have applied it. Now, what does this say to you?” The preacher might state: “You’ve got to decide how you’re going to spend your

⁶⁶ The third chapter of this thesis-project contains added information on application of Biblical truth and the needed skills to make the truth stick in people’s minds.

⁶⁷ J. Daniel Baumann, *An Introduction to Contemporary Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1972), 243.

⁶⁸ Stephen F. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 255.

⁶⁹ The third chapter of this thesis-project contains a list of categories of application that can serve as helpful additions to the information given in this lecture.

money,” or “You’ve got to decide whether you’re going to take your marriage vows seriously,” or “It’s you—not you plural, but you singular—you personally must decide what you will do with the truth you’ve heard.”

Your movement from “we” to “you” will laser the truth to their heart. You are asking for a commitment. You are asking for each person to make a personal decision that, when acted upon, will bring transformation.

Make Your Application Practical by Showing Them How

After you have made the truth personal by changing the pronouns, now you can take it a step further by showing your listeners how to apply the truth. Resist the temptation to tell people the truth, but show them how to live the truth. When telling a husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church, it is helpful to move beyond the command. Most husbands know that he should love his wife and that he is called to lay down his life for her. But how he can do this might be on his mind as you are preaching. You might say something like this:

God’s Word tells husbands to love their wives like Christ loved the church. But your wife is distant emotionally. She snaps at you for not picking up a gallon of milk at the supermarket. When you come home, she barely gives you a glance, and you notice that her hair is not done, her make-up is not on, and her clothing leaves something to be desired. She’s letting herself go. That night when you crawl into bed, she pretends to be asleep.

And yet God’s voice is clear: “Love your wife as Christ loved the church.” Oh, but it’s tempting to listen to your culture on this one. If she’s going to act this way, ignore her. Don’t rub her back. Don’t tell her you love her. Don’t try to confide in her. You can talk to that woman who works with you. She acts interested in you and loves to listen when you talk. She’s more caring and compassionate. She appreciates you.

But God's voice is clear: "Love your wife as Christ loved the church." If Christ could love the church when she is unlovely, then you can love your wife when she's unlovely. You can take a cutting remark when she snaps at you. You can continue giving her hugs even when she seems unresponsive. You can confide in her even when she seems disinterested. You can rub her back even when her heart is cold. God did not put any conditions or restrictions on you—he simply said, "Love your wife as Christ loved the church." And for you and me—that means today. That means this afternoon.

You have moved from telling men to love their wives to showing them how. Even unmarried people can relate to this illustration because they see what love looks like. They can move from a concrete example to their lives more easily than they can move from an abstract concept, like love, to their lives.

Make Your Application Purposeful

It is always helpful to remind everyone of the goal: conformity to Christ. We are not trying to conform our lives to earn God's love. We are not trying to change our behavior to secure God's mercy. As Olford states, "In the last analysis the whole purpose of preaching the Word is to bring people into conformity to Christ."⁷⁰ To do this, one might ask a question similar to the one Haddon Robinson proposes in his chapter on "The Power of Purpose": "What do you expect will happen in the listener as a result of this sermon?"⁷¹ To what decision will you call the listener? Is there a confession that is needed or a change of mind that this text will require to align our hearts more fully to God? When the preacher is clear on the purpose of the sermon and how the application connects to this sermon, then there can be clarity in the presentation. There can be immediacy in the invitation. Olford

⁷⁰ Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 257.

⁷¹ Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 108.

concludes, “Every message, sermon or truth declared, must elicit a total response on the part of those who hear.”⁷²

Make the Change Possible

All commands and no ability to see them accomplished will leave the congregation headed toward deep frustration. When the preacher helps the people to see the truth, there remains the question, “Can they do this?” Olford states, “It is important also to tell people not only how they should respond to the truth but how they are able to respond to the truth. To place a demand on the hearer, even if true to the Word, without giving guidance and the resource available in Christ, can lead to frustration and defeat.”⁷³ It is for this reason that every message needs to share an element of the gospel. The ability to change is because of Christ. The power to change is “Christ in us, the hope of glory.” When presenting the truth, always help people see that Christ is praying for them and the Holy Spirit is working in them.⁷⁴ It is God who has promised to finish in each believer what he has started. It is God who has given us the Holy Spirit who promises to bear in us the fruit of the Spirit.

Questions for Discussion

1. How have you successfully integrated pastoral care and preaching preparation? How can you improve in this area?

⁷² Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 273-272.

⁷³ Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 170.

⁷⁴ The second chapter of this thesis-project contains Biblical research identifying the power of God’s Word and Spirit to bring about growth in a person’s life.

2. What is the role and benefit of real-life examples in preaching? Have people meet in small groups to discuss the questions. After the groups meet, come back together and discuss the responses.

Assignment

1. Take one of your recent sermons and identify one of the truths you were trying to communicate. Work your idea through the ladder of application found in chapter three and write a paragraph that makes your application personal, practical, purposeful, and attainable.
2. At the end of this seminar, you will be asked to take a survey. The purpose of this evaluation is to obtain information regarding the content and presentation of this seminar. Your honest feedback is greatly appreciated. You do not need to place your name on his form.

CHAPTER FIVE: EVALUATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The preaching seminar entitled “Transformational Preaching” was presented on Monday, January 31, 2011, at Salem First Baptist Church from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and Thursday, February 3, 2011, at Valley Life Church from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. The seminar covered the lectures included in chapter 4 of this thesis-project. The seminar was divided into four sections according to the four lectures, which included Theological Convictions, Personal Transformation of the Preacher, Revealing the Glory of God, and Preaching to a Person’s Whole Body. Upon completion of the seminar sessions, all individuals in attendance were given an evaluation form regarding the content and delivery of the presentation.

Responses from the Evaluation Form

The following is a report based on the responses given to the evaluation form.

1. Do you primarily preach or teach?

- 42 people attended and filled out a survey
- 16 considered themselves primarily preachers
- 17 considered themselves primarily teachers
- 9 did not consider themselves teachers or preachers

The seminar was directed at preachers and teachers of Salem First Baptist Church, as well as pastors from fifteen churches in a neighboring community, Dallas, Oregon. It was also opened to those who did not fit into either of those categories. Salem First Baptist has fifteen adult Sunday school classes from the high school to senior age, and it employs eight pastors, including the author of this thesis-project.

2. Is the audience to which you routinely preach or teach a multigenerational group?

Of the 17 teachers, 6 teach to a multigenerational audience and 11 do not.
Of the 16 pastors, 14 preach to a multigenerational audience and 2 do not.
This question does not apply to the other 9 persons in the groups.

It is clear from the preceding data that most of the pastors in the audience preach to a multigenerational audience: exactly 87% said that their audience is multigenerational. However, among the teachers in the audience, only 35% reported a multigenerational audience. This was not startling as classes at Salem First Baptist are specifically targeted, whereas those who preach minister to the entire congregation. From the discussion, it became clear that the information about listening and pastoral care were of equal interest to those who communicated to a multigenerational audience and to those who taught a homogeneous audience.

3. How many years have you been preaching or teaching?

8 have been preaching or teaching for less than 5 years
11 have been preaching or teaching for 6 to 15 years
8 have been preaching or teaching for 16 to 30 years
6 have been preaching or teaching for more than 30 years

These numbers show that the teachers and preachers who attended the seminars had a wide range of experience. The numbers were fairly even across the board, and it was helpful for this author to hear the responses of those with a great depth of experience and those who have just started preaching or teaching. For questions 4 through 7, participants were asked to indicate how they felt toward the given topic with the following scale:

Valuable (5) (4) (3) (2) (1) Little value

Each question is given three graphs: one to show the responses from the teachers, one for the pastors, and one for the laypersons.

4. The content of the seminar was:

Teachers						
	5	4	3	2	1	
Extremely valuable	11	6				Of little value
Detailed enough	11	5	1			Too general
Current and relevant	14	3				Outdated
Cohesive and logical	13	4				Fragmented
Pastors						
	5	4	3	2	1	
Extremely valuable	9	7				Of little value
Detailed enough	6	9	1			Too general
current and Relevant	12	4				Outdated
						Fragmented
Cohesive and logical	11	5				
Laypersons						
	5	4	3	2	1	
Extremely valuable	7	2				Of little value
Detailed enough	8	1				Too general
current and Relevant	8	1				Outdated
Cohesive and logical	7	2				Fragmented

It was generally agreed that the content of the seminar was valuable. The seminar lost a few points on detail, which is also seen when the participants score the length of the

seminars. Most people understood the time constraints but still wished that more detail could be shown.

The next question was highly informative. A fear expressed by many is that preaching and teaching are losing their effectiveness, and this fear causes many to question if preaching still has a place in modern culture. The question of relevance scored highest among all participants. It is clear that they felt this topic was completely relevant to today's issues. The seminar also scored high on its cohesiveness. The seminar does contain a lot of information to be covered, so it was a affirming to see that the participants felt that they could follow the logical train of thought.

5. The seminar presenter:

Teachers		5	4	3	2	1	
Was knowledgeable	15	2					Was unsure of material
Had good presentation skills	16	1					Had poor skills
Encouraged participation	10	5	2				Discouraged participation
Addressed my level and needs	10	7					Did not address them
Preachers		5	4	3	2	1	
Was knowledgeable	14	2					Was unsure of material
Had good presentation skills	15	1					Had poor skills
Encouraged participation	8	7	1				Discouraged participation
Addressed my level and needs	10	6					Did not address them

Laypersons

	5	4	3	2	1	
Was knowledgeable	8	1				Was unsure of material
Had good presentation skills	8	1				Had poor skills
Encouraged participation	6	3				Discouraged participation
Addressed my level and needs	6	3				Did not address them

Overall, the participants felt that the presenter had adequate knowledge of the topic. The response to how the topic was presented was overwhelmingly good. The question as to the skills of the presenter was very positive, and people felt encouraged to ask questions throughout the presentation.

6. Training materials (hand-outs):**Teachers**

	5	4	3	2	1	
Are helpful	5	9	2			Are poor
Follow course content	12	4				Are disjointed
Are valuable	9	6	1			Are of no value

Pastors

	5	4	3	2	1	
Are helpful	6	10				Are poor
Follow course content	11	5				Are disjointed
Are valuable for reference	6	8	2			Are of no value

Laypersons

	5	4	3	2	1	
Are helpful	8		1			Are poor
Follow course content	8		1			Are disjointed
Are valuable for reference	7	1	1			Are of no value

For the seminar, the training material prepared was a handout that followed the PowerPoint™ presentation. As the hand-out followed the lessons exactly, the participants scored it high on the ability to follow course content. The second highest score went to its value as a reference during the seminar. As far as its usefulness overall, it scored well.

7. Overall seminar:**Teachers**

	5	4	3	2	1	
Had clear goals	12	5				Had unclear goals
Met its goals	12	5				Missed its goals
Was long enough	9	7	2			Was too short
Was helpful	11	5	1			Was poor

Pastors

	5	4	3	2	1	
Had clear goals	9	4				Had unclear goals
Met its goals	13	3				Missed its goals
Was long enough	6	3	5	2		Was too short
Was helpful	12	4				Was poor

Laypersons

	5	4	3	2	1	
Had clear goals	8	1				Had unclear goals
Met its goals	8	1				Missed its goals
Was long enough	7	2				Was too short
Was helpful	8	1				Was poor

The response to the seminar overall was very encouraging. Every lecture began with a key idea, and that fact translated into high scores on the question concerning the seminar's goals. According to the data, it is clear the participants felt the goals that were set were also met. The one area that scored relatively low was length of the seminar. After the seminars, people commented that the topic was important and they wished we had more time to go into greater depth. The second highest scores belonged to the usefulness or overall helpfulness of the seminar. It is encouraging to see that what was said had an effect on participants and would be used by them.

8. What one thing will you do differently in your teaching/preaching as a result of this seminar?

Resoundingly the most important desire for change or improvement was the pastor's or teacher's ability to take abstract concepts such as peace or hope and turn them into a concrete picture that listeners can walk away with. The responses indicated that teachers and preachers were going to pursue new and creative ways to explain abstract concepts. They recognized the need to, as one individual stated, "go beyond the surface level." Many individuals felt that they were not listening enough to their congregations or classes. There was a strong desire to become better listeners because they have a strong desire to be listened to themselves.

9. What was the most useful aspect of this seminar?

The responses to this question were not very detailed, as most of the participants could not choose one thing that stood out among the rest. This was evidenced by comments such as, "it was all good" and "I can't select one." However, there were two common

responses. The first was the idea of preaching to a person's whole body. Because this was a new idea, not in its content but its application, it was encouraging to see new listeners understand it quickly. Preaching to the eyes was the most popular example, as this tied in with what most teachers and preachers wanted to work on personally from question 8. The second thing that was commented on most was recognizing that the preacher or teacher and the audience are going through the same journey of transformation. The individuals recognized they had to be patient, for transformation is a journey for themselves and not an instantaneous event.

10. What would you suggest for improving the seminar?

The last question dealt with the desire to improve the seminar in the future. The participants said they wanted the seminar to be longer or said nothing at all. This was understandable, because the entire content of this thesis-project was packed into two and one-half hours. Because this was the case, there was little time for discussion or questions, though the presenter did allow for some questions during the presentation and after the official ending. The participants felt that the material was well grounded, well thought out, and well delivered, according to the data, but responses to this question show that participants could have used more time to digest the material. In the future, the presenter will better prepare the audience by telling them in advance that the seminar is best suited for two ninety-minute presentations. This would allow for discussion and questions throughout the seminar.

11. Comments

This item on the survey is obviously not a question but allowed for any other needed feedback from the audience. Overall the participants were grateful for the opportunity to glean from what the presenter has learned through this process. It is apparent through the responses that this seminar was deemed useful and relevant for people who want to communicate God's Word effectively. Comments critiquing the seminar included ideas about inserting more time to analyze what they had been taught in the lesson and ask questions of the presenter. Before teaching this again, the presenter will try to implement each of these suggestions in order to assure a greater amount of satisfaction from the audience.

Final Conclusions

Preaching is hard work. There are so many factors involved, from exegeting the text to exegeting the audience. When thinking of the audience, the preacher quickly realizes the wide range of the persons who sit in front of him each week. They differ in age, economic position, educational background, and a legion of other factors. Some are mature in their faith, and others are infants in their journey with Christ. Each of them comes for a variety of reasons and with a broad range of expectations. But the preacher must come with one desire: to preach God's Word so as to help each listener be transformed into the image of Christ. To accomplish this goal, this author has discovered both the challenge and through this study significant help to see this aim realized.

Transformation is not a fast process but one that is realized over an undetermined time. This author has grown in this study in his appreciation for integrating pastoral care

and preaching. He has increased his practice of intentional listening. He has also added to his lunches and coffee chats moments where he and his companions specifically touch on upcoming preaching topics. As this author preaches for transformation, he has been convicted of his need to pursue his own transformation with greater intention. Through this study he has increased his spiritual disciplines. He has become more aware of the need for growth in his own life, including the discipline of rigorous study of God's Word. It has also included additional prayer about preaching.

Preaching for transformation does carry with it risks, because a pastor will avoid broad generalities and speak to people's hearts. It carries the risk of cutting deep enough to cause a person to want to change. As the author thinks about his sermons, he has a greater appreciation for connecting to his audience. He has a sharpened appreciation for moving abstract concepts into visual and perceivable truths that stay in the hearts and minds of listeners. He has attempted to sharpen the purpose of each sermon and communicate clear applications. In particular to applications, he has attempted to show people how to live out the truth more than just telling them what the truth is.

In this study, the author has gained a greater appreciation for the glory of God. In the study of God's Word, he has become more convinced than ever that what pastors and congregants all need is not better circumstances but a better view of God. He wants to grow in his ability to reveal in the sermon the glory of God through displaying his uniqueness.

The teaching of this project affirmed its importance through positive feedback and the invitation to teach more. The comments have encouraged the writer to offer it to other pastoral groups in the area. In addition there are a group of students at a local Christian

college that have indicated a strong desire to be mentored in their preaching. It is the author's desire to continue to develop preachers and teachers in his own church as well as in the region he lives.

The writer has also concluded that the end of this thesis-project is not the end of his research and reflection upon this subject. There are more books to read. This author has been encouraged to study other preachers, especially of previous generations, to examine how they preached for transformation. In addition to preaching, this study has opened a door into the study of personal change. When put together, the study of preaching and personal transformation will help the people of God realize the vision of God to be like Christ. He has been challenged to engage in a greater venture that will, he hopes, improve his preaching for years to come. He has just scratched the surface on learning about preaching for transformation and will turn the page so more discovery can begin.

APPENDIX A

TRANSFORMATIONAL PREACHING/TEACHING SEMINAR EVALUATION FORM

The purpose of this evaluation is to obtain information regarding the content and presentation of this seminar. Your honest feedback is greatly appreciated. You do not need to place your name on this form.

1. Do you primarily preach ____ or teach ____ a Sunday School Class?
2. Is the audience to which you routinely preach or teach a multigenerational group?
____ Yes
____ No
3. How many years have you been teaching or preaching?
____ Less than five years
____ Between 6-15 years
____ Between 16-30 years
____ More than 30 years

Instructions: Place an X on the line beside each comment at the level which best represents your evaluation.

4. The content of the workshop was:
- | | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
|--------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------|
| extremely valuable | | | | | | of little value |
| detailed enough | | | | | | too general |
| current & relevant | | | | | | outdated |
| cohesive & logical | | | | | | fragmented |

5. The seminar presenter:

5 4 3 2 1

was knowledgeable	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	was unsure of material
had good presentation skills	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	had poor skills
encouraged participation	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	discouraged participation
addressed my level & needs	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	did not address them

6. The training materials (hand-outs):

5 4 3 2 1

are helpful	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	are poor
follow course content	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	are disjointed
are valuable	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	are of no value

7. Overall, the seminar:

5 4 3 2 1

had clear goals	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	had unclear goals
met its goals	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	missed its goals
was long enough	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	was too short
was helpful	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	was poor

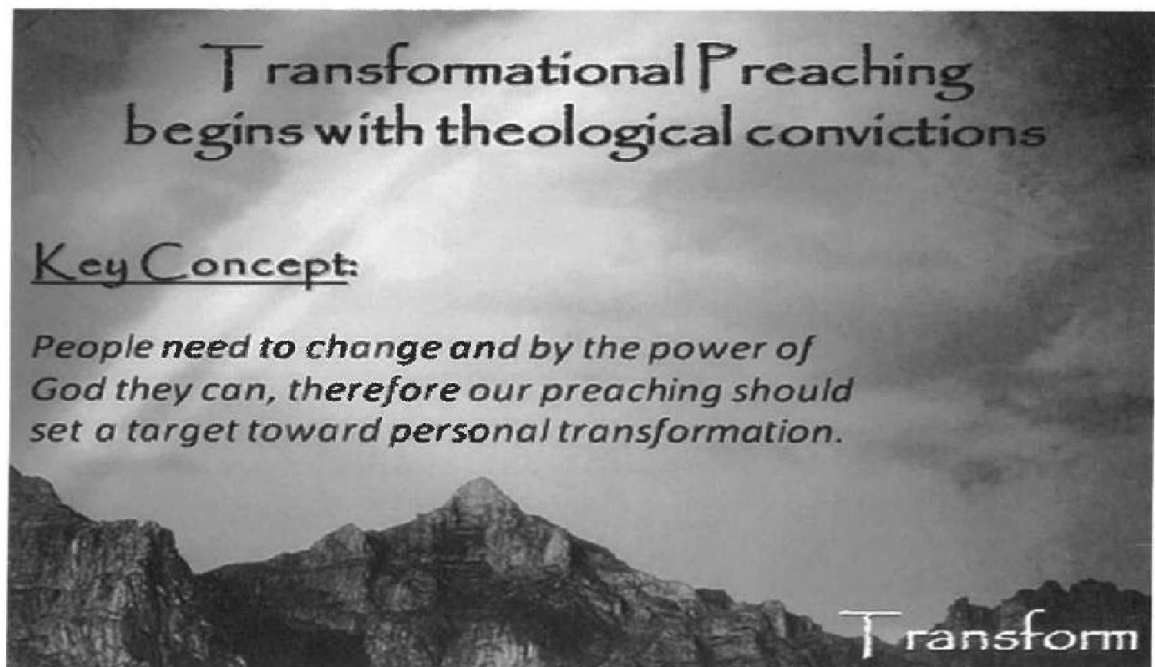
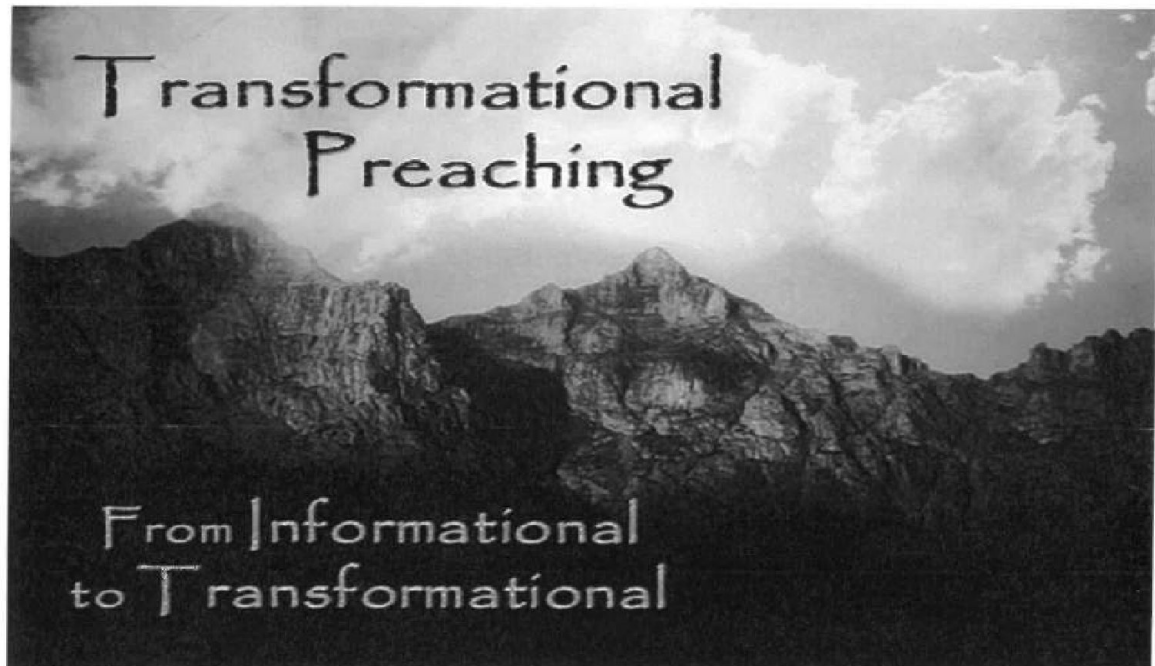
8. What one thing will you do differently in your teaching/preaching as a result of this seminar?

9. What was the most useful aspect of this seminar?

10. What would you suggest for improving the seminar?

11. Comments:

APPENDIX B
SEMINAR POWERPOINT SLIDES



Theological Convictions

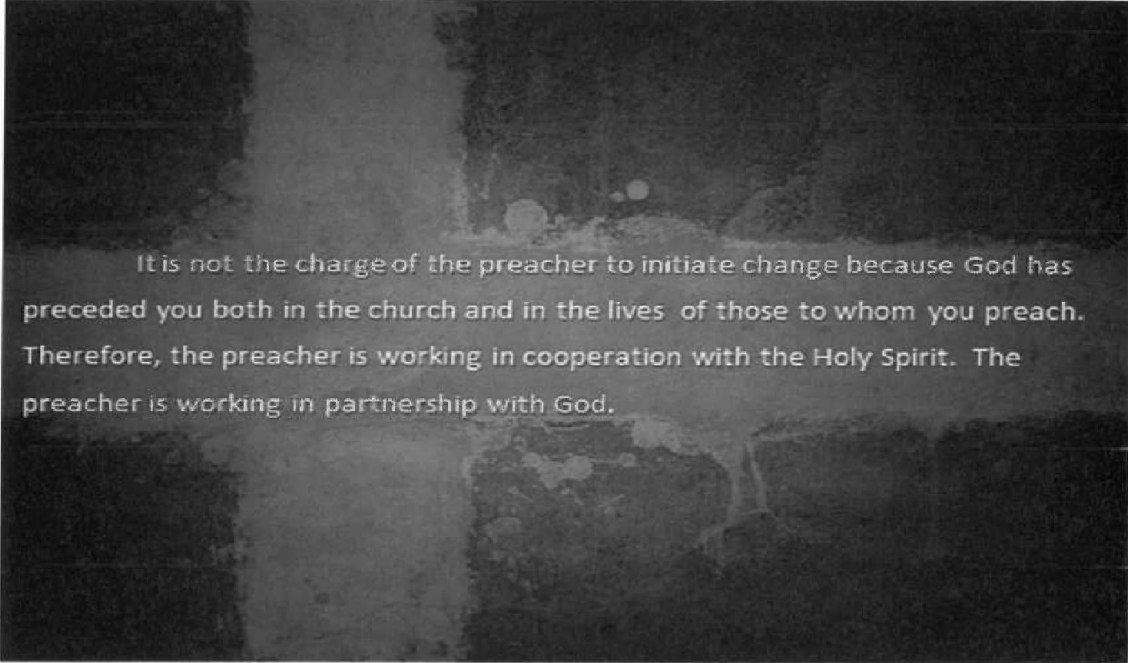
We need to be transformed

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? - Jeremiah 17:9

Theological Convictions

We can be transformed

*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.
- 2 Cor 5:17*



It is not the charge of the preacher to initiate change because God has preceded you both in the church and in the lives of those to whom you preach. Therefore, the preacher is working in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. The preacher is working in partnership with God.



Theological Convictions

*Transformation can be a **joy** if
I have the **right motive***

Theological Convictions

Motivations for Change:

1. To prove our worth to God
2. To prove our worth to people
3. To prove our worth to ourselves
4. The motivation of the Gospel
 - to change not so God will love us but because He has loved us.

Theological Convictions

Transformational Preaching ***aligns with God's vision***

Preaching edifies the individual and it edifies the body
- 1 Cor 14:4

Theological Convictions

*Transformation is a **process**--not instantaneous*

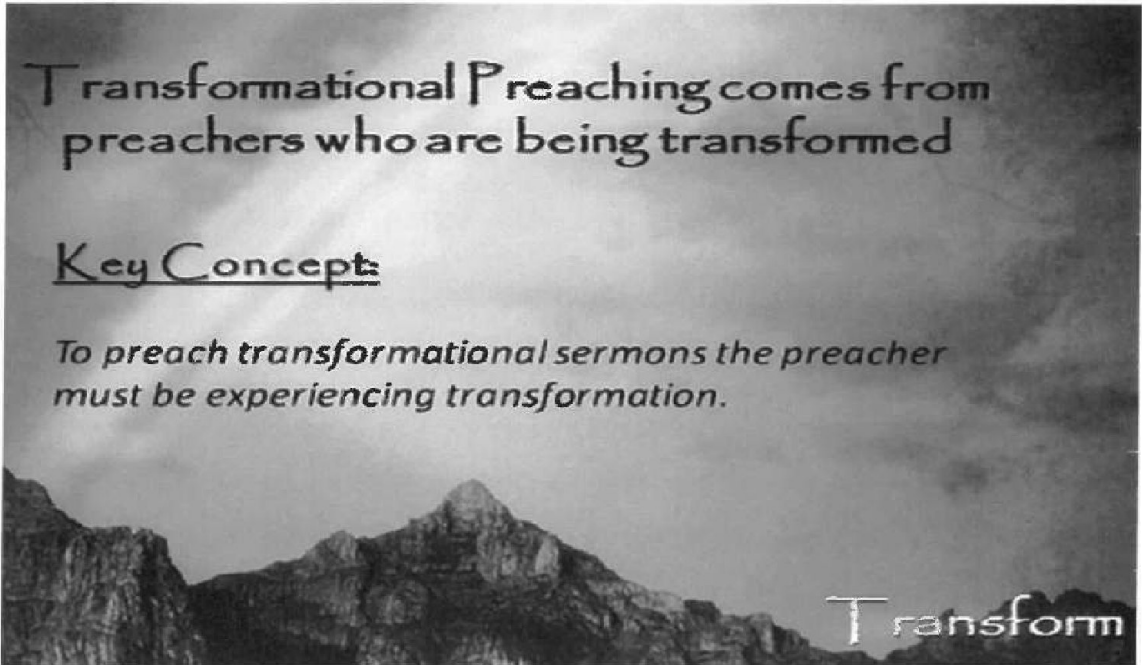
Transformation: to change inwardly in fundamental character or condition

"We must distinguish here between the verbs "change" and "transform," using exacting definitions. To change is to substitute one thing for another.... But to transform something cuts much more profoundly. It is to cause a metamorphosis in form or structure, a change in the very condition or nature of a thing, a change into another substance, a radical change in outward form or inner character.... It is change of this breadth and depth that is fostered by transforming leadership." *James McGregor Burns*

Theological Convictions

*Transformational Preaching is
done out of **obedience***



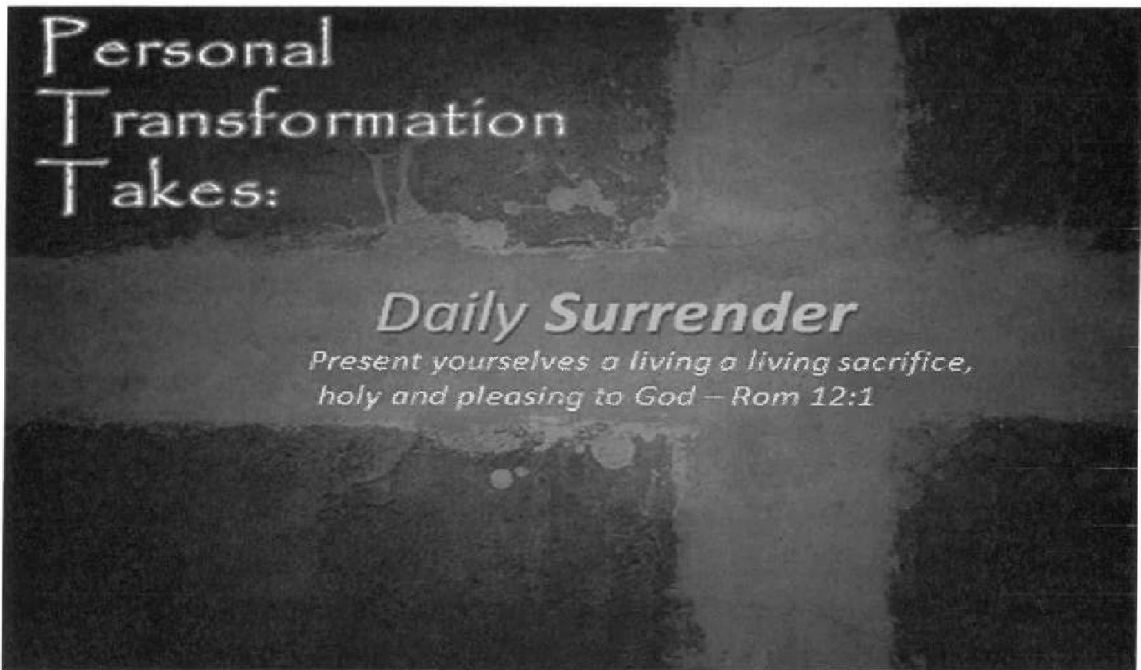


Transformational Preaching comes from
preachers who are being transformed

Key Concept:

*To preach transformational sermons the preacher
must be experiencing transformation.*

Transform



Personal
Transformation
Takes:

Daily Surrender

*Present yourselves a living a living sacrifice,
holy and pleasing to God – Rom 12:1*

Personal Transformation Takes:

Renewal of your thinking

Be transformed by the renewing of your mind – Rom 12:2

"I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord,...but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner life might be nourished."
– George Muller

Personal Transformation Takes:

Live with a right view of your gifting

Personal Transformation Takes:

A life of love

"We must live out the truth of God's word on the street in relationship with people or it never really touches our hearts and changes the very fabric of our character. I believe most significant transformation is not the bolt of lightning, but rather the formation that is wrought by the church in the daily little things we do." – William Willimon

Personal Transformation Takes:

A life of faith

Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer.
– Rom 12:12

Personal Transformation Takes:

*A fight for a **Holy** life*



Transformational Preaching Reveals the Glory of God

Key Concept:

"People are starving for the greatness of God."

-John Piper

Transform

Discussion

Genesis 16:1-16 or Isaiah 6:1-13

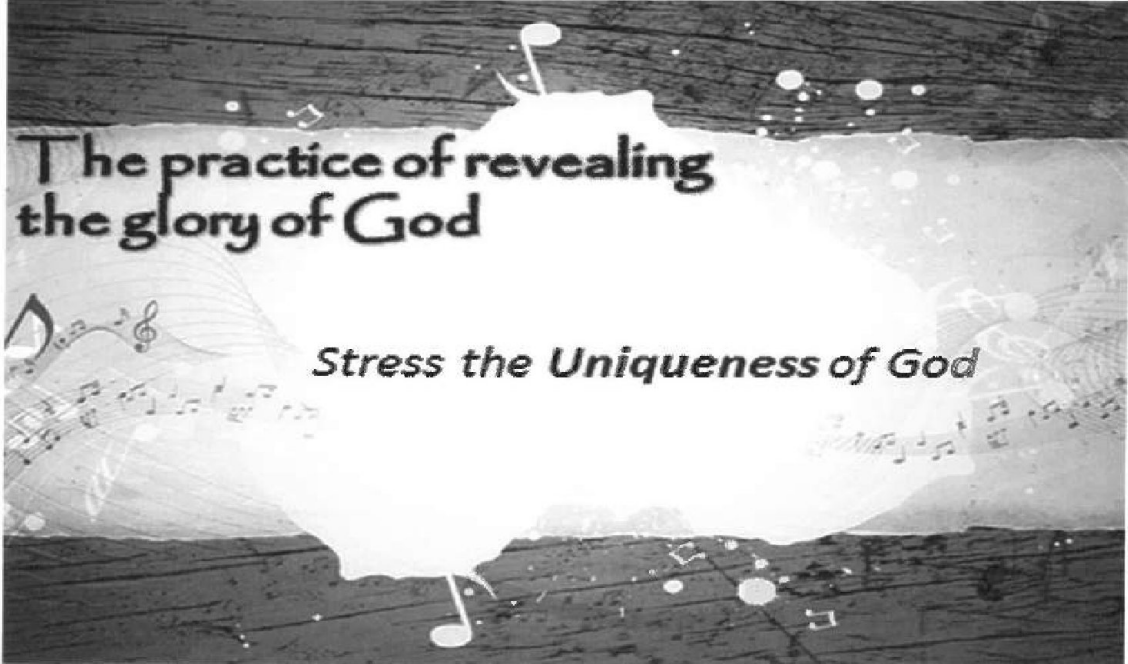
1. What did the person or people discover about God?
2. What did they discover about themselves?
3. What transformation occurred after the revelation of God?



The relationship of the glory of God to transformation

2 Corinthians 3: 17,18

1. In Christ there is freedom from the veil.
2. In Christ we have the ability to see the Glory of God.
3. When we gaze upon the Glory of God we are being transformed into His likeness.



The practice of revealing the glory of God

Stress the Uniqueness of God



The practice of revealing the glory of God

Stress the Exclusivism of Jesus



The practice of revealing the glory of God

Stress the Sovereignty of God

Transformational Preaching Communicates to a Person's Body

Key Concept:


Transformational preaching takes in to account the person's whole body to effectively connect in communication.

Transform

Preach to the Ears

- Link pastoral care and sermon preparation

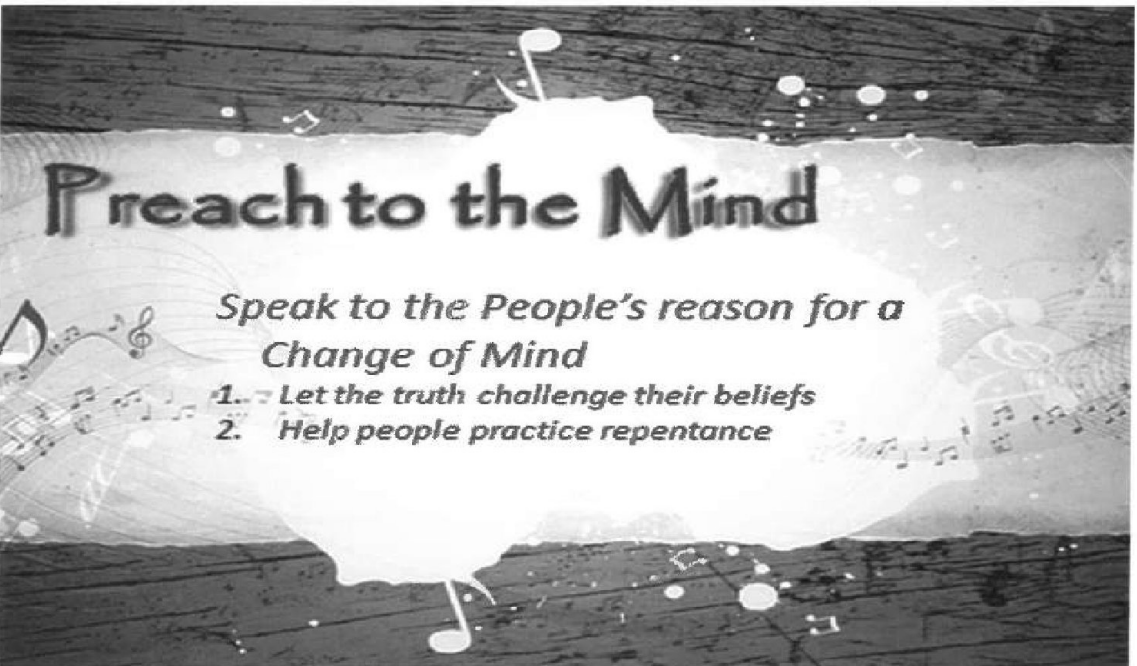
"It is only through doing people-work that you become the preacher you need to be—someone who knows sin, how the heart works, what people's struggles are, and so on. Pastoral care and leadership is to some degree sermon prep. More accurately, it is preparing the preacher, not just the sermon." — Tim Keller



Preach to the Ears

Develop systems of feedback

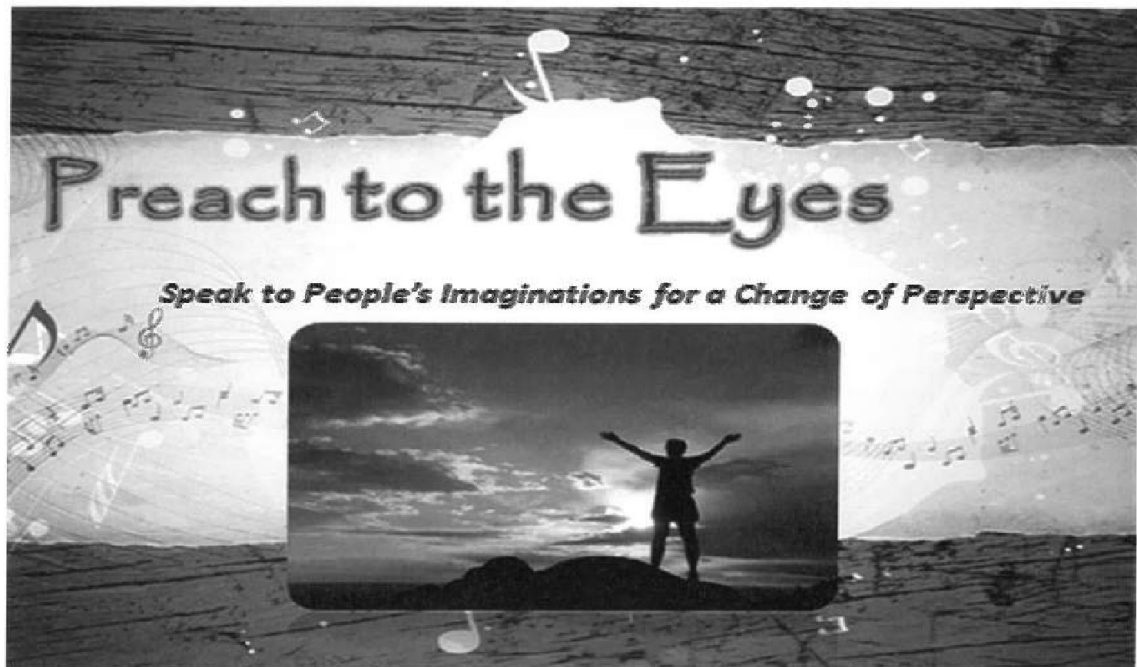
- 1. Let your congregation help you ask the right questions***
- 2. Visualize the audience in your sermon preparation***

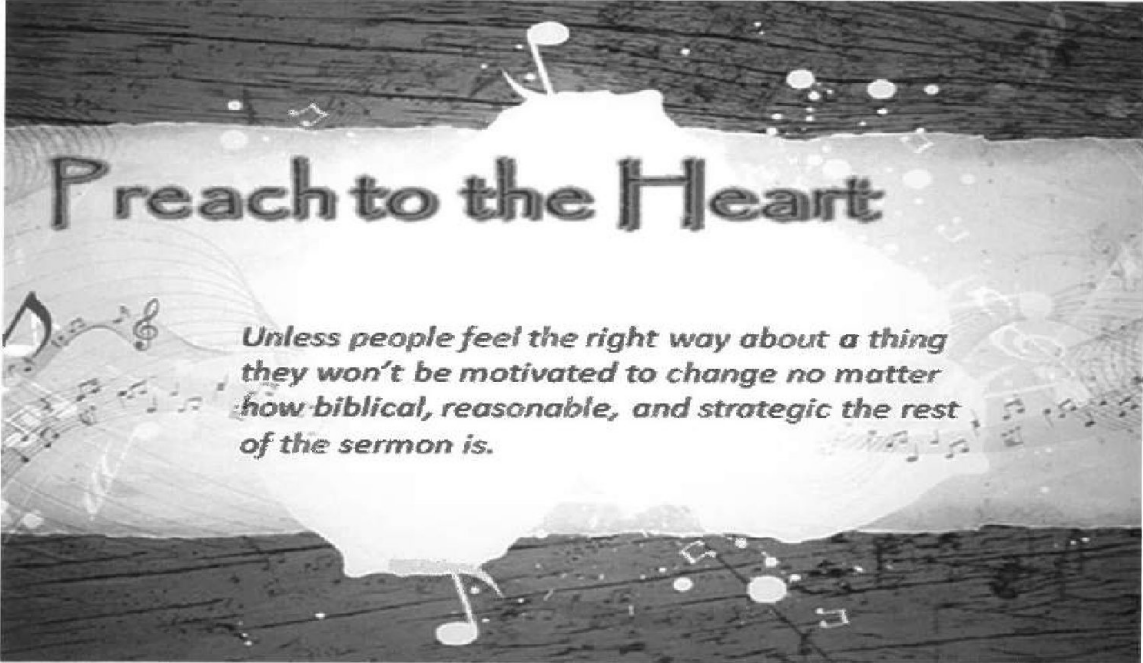


Preach to the Mind

Speak to the People's reason for a Change of Mind


- 1. Let the truth challenge their beliefs***
- 2. Help people practice repentance***





Preach to the Heart

Unless people feel the right way about a thing they won't be motivated to change no matter how biblical, reasonable, and strategic the rest of the sermon is.



Preach to the Feet

1. *Make your application personal*
2. *Make your application practical by showing them how*
3. *Make your application purposeful*
4. *Make the change possible*

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VITA

Mark Hanke was born January 12, 1962, in Corvallis, Oregon. He lived in Corvallis with his mother, brother, and sister, and graduated from Corvallis High School in 1980.

Upon graduation from Corvallis High School, he attended Oregon State University, graduating in 1984 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education. Upon graduation, he taught junior high school in Monroe, Oregon, for two years. In 1986, he began studies at Denver Seminary and earned the Master of Divinity degree in May 1989.

He served Hoffman Heights Baptist Church in Aurora, Colorado, from October 1986 to January 2001; Rocky Mountain Conservative Baptist Association from January 2001 to September 2001, in Littleton Colorado; First Baptist Church in Fort Collins, Colorado, from September 2001 to December 2008. In December 2008, he accepted the call of senior pastor to Salem First Baptist Church in Salem, Oregon, where he continues in ministry. In addition, he was an adjunct professor at Denver Seminary from September 1990 to August 2007.

Mark is married to the former Kerri Filosi (1984). They have three sons, Tyler (22), Chad (21), and Jacob (18), and one daughter Anna-Noelle (16).

This thesis-project is presented in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree Doctor of Ministry in Preaching from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He completed his Doctor of Ministry residency studies from 2003-2005 and anticipates graduating in May 2011.